Tide of Fate

or The Curse of Clifton

SOUTHWORTH

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THE TIDE OF FATE.

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THE TIDE OF FATE;

OR,

THE CURSE OF CLIFTON.

BY

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'ARRESTED BRIDE,' 'BEATRICE,' 'BRIDAL EVE,' 'BRIDE'S FATE,' 'BRIDE OF AN EVENING,' 'CHANGED BRIDES,' 'TIDE OF FATE,' 'FAIR PLAY,' 'FATAL MARRIAGE,' 'FORTUNE SEEKER,' 'HAGAR,' 'HIDDEN HAND,' 'HOW HE WON HER,' 'LOST HEIRESS,' 'ISHMAEL,' 'MISSING BRIDE,' 'SELF-RAISED,' 'NEAREST AND DEAREST,' 'A LEAP IN THE DARK,' 'FOR WOMAN'S LOVE,' 'UNKNOWN,' 'ONLY A GIRL'S HEART,' &c.

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THE TIDE OF FATE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOUNTAIN HUT.

A lonesome lodge
That stands so lowe in lonely glen,
The little windowe, dim and darke,
Is hung with ivy, brier and yewe.—PERCY RELIQUES.

UPON a glorious morning, in the midsummer of 18—, two equestrian travellers spurred their horses up the ascent of the Eagle's Flight, the loftiest and most perilous pass of the Alleghanies.

Though the sun was near the meridian, and all the sky above was "darkly, deeply, beautifully blue," and perfectly clear, yet all the earth beneath was covered by a thick, low-lying fog.

On reaching the highest point of the pass, both travellers drew rein and paused, looking—North, South, East, West—over the ocean of vapor rolling from horizon to horizon below them! And while they so pause, let us catch that nearly vertical ray of the sun that falls upon them, lighting up the group like fire above the fog, and daguerreotype them as they stand.

Both are young men of about the same age, probably twenty-five; both are well mounted upon fine bay horses; and both wear the undress uniform of the ——— Regiment of Cavalry; and here all resemblance between them ceases.

He on the right hand, who holds in his horse's head with so tight a rein, causing the gallant steed to arch his beautiful neck so gracefully, while he lets fly a falcon-glance around the shrouded horizon, is Archer Clifton, of Clifton, now holding the rank of Captain in the ——— Regiment of Cavalry. His form is of middle size, strongly built, yet elegantly proportioned. His complexion is dark and bronzed as by exposure; his features are Roman; his hair and whiskers trimly cut, are of the darkest chestnut, with what painters call *cool* lights, which is to say, that there is no warmth of coloring even where the sun lights. Indeed, there is no warmth about the looks of the whole man. His eyes are singularly beautiful and brilliant, combining all those dark, shifting, scintillating, prismatic hues, that would drive an artist mad, for want of colors to portray, or an author to despair, for lack of words to describe. He wears the dark blue uniform of his regiment, and manages his noble charger with the ease and grace only to be found in the accomplished cavalry officer.

He upon the left hand, who, with languid air and loosened

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rein, inclines his body forward, permitting his graceful horse to droop his head and scent the earth, as in quest of herbage, is Francis Fairfax, of Green Plains, a Lieutenant in the company under the command of Captain Clifton. He is of about the same height as Clifton, but his figure is slender almost to fragility. His features are delicate and piquant. His complexion is fair and transparent. His hair is also very fair, and waves off from a forehead so snowy, round and smooth, as to seem child-like, especially with those clear blue eyes, that now brood roguishly under their golden lashes, as in profound quest of mischief, and now light up and sparkle with fun and frolic. He *miss*manages his spoiled pet of a steed with the charming *insouciance*, only to be seen in the amateur poet, painter, player, musician, etc., etc., etc. And yet there is sometimes an earnest, thoughtful aspect about the youth, that surprises one into the suspicion that all his levity is superficial, and hides his deeper and better nature, as stubble sometimes covers and conceals a mine of precious metal.

"Well!" at last spoke Mr. Fairfax, "it is now about twelve hours since we were emptied out of that atrocious old stage coach, which, for a week past, has been beating us about in its interior, from side to side, and from seat to ceiling, as if we were a lump of butter in an old woman's churn, and whose kindest turn of all to us was, when it turned over and shook us out down the precipice, and into the trough of the Wolf's Lick, as if we had been apples fed to the pigs. Oh! by the lost baronetcy of the house of Fairfax, my self-esteem will never recover the effects of it! Perdition seize the picturesque at this price! And ever since long before daybreak this morning, have we been wandering about over these mountain tops, with the earth below us hidden in mist, and only the highest peaks looming through the sea of vapor like islands in the ocean! And *we* plunging wildly about in the fog, like death on the pale horse riding the waves! And to the momentarily recurring risk of riding over some hidden precipice of a thousand feet perpendicular. If this be your glorious mountain scenery, to the demon with it! For I had as lief be on the open sea with the 'Ancient Mariner!'"

To this half petulant, half laughing philipic Captain Clifton, while his glance still roved over the shrouded hemisphere, replied, with an indulgent smile—

"You cannot see the face of the country for the morning veil she chooses to wear. But wait till high noon, when the sun, her royal lover, in the meridian of his glory, shall raise that gauzy covering, and she, like a right royal bride, shall smile and blush in light and glory."

"By my soul, I could fancy the lady earth wore this veil to conceal fast gathering tears, rather than smiles or blushes! *Anglicè*, I think we shall have rain soon—though blistered be my tongue for saying it!—not about the rain but about the veil! For, look you! Fret as I may at this journey

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through the mist—yet this fine scenery, under a cloud as it literally is, gives me a feeling of breadth, grandeur! I expand, spread out over the vast area of its shrouded solitudes. Oh! it is only on the boundless sea or on the mountain top, with a hemisphere below me, that I feel as if I had room enough to live in! And you give me a feeling of suffocation by drawing in this awful shrouded world to the simile of a lady's veiled face! But it is not to be wondered at! No, by the shade of Marc Antony, and all other great men, who held the whole world light in the balance with a woman's evanescent smileor tear! everything is *àpropos des femmes* with you now. Could the music of the spheres suddenly burst upon your astonished ears, as soon as you had recovered your senses, your highest note of admiration would be to compare that universal diapason of divine harmony to Lady Carolyn's silver laugh!"

"I do not recollect ever to have heard 'Lady' Carolyn laugh."

"*Ten thousand pardons!* A Cliiton of Clifton never laughs. But tell me, Captain, whereabouts in the world—I mean in the clouds, *are we?* And when shall we see this pure pearl of beauty and the rich casket that enshrines her; this stately lily of the mountains and the parterre where she blooms;—when shall we behold Paradise and the Peri—Clifton and Lady Carolyn?"

Without replying to this mock-poetic strain, Captain Clifton remained with his eyes still wandering from East to West, and back again over the rolling vapour. And Fairfax continued—

"I suspect now, by your abstracted air and wandering eye, that you have lost your way in the clouds—not the first time such a thing has happened to a lover, nor would it be strange in a place like this, where the only land-marks are mountain tops sticking out of the fog with a day's journey between each!"

At this moment a distant group of peaks broke suddenly through the mist like new isles thrown up by the sea, and glittered whitely in the sunlight against the deep blue horizon.

"See!" exclaimed Clifton, roused from his apathy by the sudden apparition. "Look, Fairfax! I will show you White Cliffs! Look straight before you to the Western horizon—a little North of West. You see a crescent of seven peaks rising through the mist against the sky. That is White Cliffs."

"Looking white enough at this distance—quite like snow-capped mountains, in fact."

"Yes. They are of white quartz, and their peaks rising from the girdle of dark evergreens around their base and sides, have quite a cooling effect in hot weather."

"Ah! just so. Now how far off are those same blessed refrigerators?"

"About twenty-five miles in a bee-line. But the mountain road is very circuitous, and makes the distance nearly forty. However, if we ride well, we shall be able to reach Clifton in time to surprise Mrs. Clifton at tea."

"Heaven be praised for that possibility!" ejaculated Fairfax, as they prepared to descend the mountain side.

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As they rode down, Captain Clifton, warming slightly from his cool reserve, said—

"I think, Fairfax, that you, poet and artist as you claim to be, will rather like Clifton. Tourists, who have visited our part of the country, think the scenery there very fine. It impresses me merely as being unique. There is something formal—but, to myself, not therefore unpleasing in that crescent of seven peaks—the tallest being in the centre and gradually declining thence to the lowest, which may be called the horns of the crescent, and point Southward. These peaks rise from a forest of—first elms and oaks around their base; then pines farther up their sides; and last of cedars, above which rise the pinnacle of white quartz. This crescent of mountains surrounds and shelters from the north winds the family mansion, which is situated in the woods at its foot. North of the peaks, the country is wild and rugged, but partly covered with thick forest, and affording the best hunting grounds in the world. There you may course the hare; track the deer; or if your tastes aspire to a fiercer conflict, hunt the wolf, the wild cat, or the bear—!"

"—Or the rattle-snake, copper-head, or moccasin! Thank you, I have no inclination for crusade against those mountaineers," laughed Fairfax.

"Perhaps you like angling? There is a trout stream at the foot of the wooded lawn, in front of the house. I must tell you about that, for it is the head waters of a fine river."

"From the Western cliff there springs a torrent that with many a leap, and fall, and rebound, tumbles tumultuously down the side of the mountain, and falling into a channel at the foot of the lawn, flows calmly on, until it meets a second fall, from whence it goes hurrying on, through forests, fields and rocks, taking tribute from many a mountain-torrent, and many a meadow-stream, and widening as it goes, until it becomes a mighty river, rushing on, to pour its flood into the majestic James. After which, they both go on, breaking through range after range of mountains, and so conquer their passage to the sea—even as in the feudal days of the olden country, some mountain chieftain, gathering his vassals together, came rushing down from his highland home, and laying all the country under tribute in his course, hurried on to throw all his treasures at the feet of his sovereign, and go with him to the wars."

"Clifton!" said Fairfax, more seriously than he had yet spoken, "all your illustrations—all your metaphors—all your thoughts, fancies and imaginings are—not 'of the earth, earthy,' but worse—far worse—of the *world, worldly!* Of the world, its castes, customs and conventions—its pomps, vanities and falsities! You speak of the grandest, the most imposing—oh! let me call it at once, the most magnificent area of mountain-scenery in the hemisphere, with all the earth, below and around, covered with a sea of vapor that

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rises and falls, rolling from horizon to horizon, like the waves of the ocean, and you compare it to a veiled royal bride! You describe a mighty mountain-river, rending its passage through the everlasting rocks, overleaping, uprooting, bearing down and bearing on all obstacles to its resistless rush towards the sea, and you liken it to a chieftain going to pay tribute to a King! Ah, Clifton of Clifton, the beauty, the glory, and the majesty of the *earth* pleases you, but the 'pomp, pride, and circumstance' of the *world* inspires you! But when was it otherwise with a Clifton, of Clifton? 'The spirit of intense worldliness has ever been their bane and curse—their sin and its punishment!'" he concluded, relapsing into his mock-tragic air.

"Ah! so you are familiar with the popular legend that you have just quoted," said Captain Clifton. "But," he added, with a sarcastic smile, "were Georgia here, I think she could refute the charge, and prove one Clifton, at least, has been guided by any spirit rather than that of 'intense worldliness.'"

"*Georgia?*"

"I beg her pardon! Mrs. Clifton, of Clifton."

"Oh! your aunt! but by my soul, Captain, that was a very irreverent way of introducing the old lady! Do young men in your patriarchal part of the country call old gentlewomen by their Christian names?"

"Old gentlewomen!" repeated Clifton, slowly, with a musing smile, adding—"Georgia is about seventeen years of age, and the most beautiful woman in the world!"

"Whe-e-e-ew! I'm amazed! I'm confounded! I'm stunned! Then—the present Mrs. Clifton is the *second* wife?"

"No, sir—Georgia is my uncle's fourth wife."

"Overwhelmed!—annihilated!" exclaimed the young man. "The—the—old Blue-beard! the old Henry VIII.! Four wives! Are they all living?—if not, where does he bury his dead?"

"*Fairfax!*" exclaimed Captain Clifton, in a tone, and with a look, that speedily recalled the young man to himself—then he added, rather haughtily—"My Uncle Clifton is a simple, gentle-hearted old man, excessively fond of women, but mark you, sir!—it is the affection of the patriarch, not of the pacha."

"Hang me if ever I saw any difference between Solomon the king, and Solimaun the caliph; Abraham the patriarch, and Aroun the pacha, in that respect," laughed the young man, until, stealing a furtive glance at the cold and haughty face of Clifton, he held out his hand, and suddenly exclaimed—"Pardon me, Clifton! or call me out! I—can't help a jest, to save my soul! but I'll fight or apologize, or render any other sort of satisfaction afterwards!"

Captain Clifton remembered that Francis Fairfax was his guest, going to spend a long mid-summer furlough at his mother's house, and so he cleared his brow and answered—

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"Nonsense!"

"Now tell me about Henry VIII.'s fourth Queen—how long has she been married—I mean the present Mrs. Clifton?"

"About two years. My uncle wedded her when she was fifteen—she is now seventeen—and, as I said, the most beautiful creature, that you, or I, or any one else, ever did, or ever shall see, anywhere."

"*Allons*—stop there! False knight and recreant! whose colors do you wear while you uphold the peerless beauty of Georgia? What would Miss Clifton of Clifton say to your admiration?"

"Ridiculous, sir! Miss Clifton is herself very beautiful, but not the *most* beautiful. Miss Clifton has *other* and *rarer* distinctions, I am proud to say!"

"Oh, I understand—her family *name!*—nevertheless, be hanged if I don't believe you have been in love with Georgia!"

"Impossible, sir! The perfect beauty of the young girl struck me forcibly, as it strikes *all others*—nay, more—impressed my imagination deeply perhaps. I confess to a *penchant* for female beauty—and—observe—it is the artist's taste, sir, not the sultan's. But in love with Georgia! Impossible, sir! She was a girl of humble parentage!"

"Ah! then you think it quite 'impossible' that a gentleman born, should be in love with a girl of 'humble parentage?'"

"Preposterous, sir!—utterly preposterous! Pray, let us hear no more about it!"

"Yet your uncle—"

"My uncle married such an one, you would say. Old gentlemen, living on their own estates, will do such things. And the world charitably ascribes it to dotage, smiles and forgives them. You will oblige me by changing the subject, Frank."

Fairfax fell into reverie, and Clifton dropped into thought, and they rode on for some time in silence, and in—joy—until—

"Floods and furies! Fire and flames!! Lightning and tempests, and sudden death!!!" exclaimed Fairfax, rearing and backing his horse with a terrible jerk, and throwing himself from the saddle, bathed in perspiration, and shaking with terror. "Look! Look there! There at your feet! Back! Back your horse, unless you wish to ride straight to the kingdom of Heaven, or—to the other place! Oh, blessed Lord! I shall never survive the shock!"

Captain Clifton backed his horse, dismounted, and following the index of Fairfax, approached the brink of the awful abyss, and looked down a perpendicular precipice of more than a thousand feet, with the remaining distance lost in shadows and dim vapors, while faintly to the ear came a low and hollow murmur, as of the roaring of many waters at a vast depth!

"This is the head of the Devil's Staircase! We have lost our way!" said Captain Clifton.

"Devil's Staircase! I should think it was! Ugh! Oo-oo-

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oo-ooh! I shall never survive it! Where does it lead to? Tell me that! To the infernal regions, I suppose, of course. Ur-r-r-r-r!" exclaimed Fairfax, with his teeth chattering.

"We have indeed made a very narrow escape," said Captain Clifton, gazing thoughtfully down the horrible pit.

"Narrow escape! Ur-r-r-r-r!" exclaimed Frank, shaking, shuddering, and streaming with cold perspiration. "I tell you, when I was providentially led to look down, and saw the fog roll away from beneath my horse's feet, and reveal that ghastly—Ur-r-r-r-r! Ur-r-r-r-r! I believe I shall chatter my teeth to powder!"

"Come, come, Fairfax! this is really unmanly. Thank an ever-watchful Providence, that has preserved you from a sudden and horrible death, and calm yourself. Be a man!"

"Be a man! You might as well say to my shuddering horse, there—be a horse! This is unhorsely! Ur-r-r-r-r! I tell you it has given me the tertian ague!"

"Why, Frank! Really!"

"Look at my horse—look even at the dumb beast! Yes, look at that gallant steed, who would charge upon a phalanx of fixed bayonets, and impale himself upon their points, if spurred to it—look at him! Positively frozen with terror!"

"Fairfax, you astonish me—certainly you are not really so much overcome."

"Overcome! My nerves are shattered to atoms, I tell you! Ur-r-r-r-r! It has given me the tertian ague, and the St. Vitus' dance! both together! Ur-r-r-r-r!"

"Now who would have supposed you to be a—of such a nervous temperament! Come, let me assist you to mount, and then away."

"What! And at the end of the next hundred yards, ride headlong over a precipice of fifteen hundred feet, and before night find sepulchre in the maws of fifty turkey-buzzards! I tell you there is neither a glorious death, an honorable burial, nor an immortal fame to be found in such a fate! Heavens and earth, no! For instance—'Whatever became of that poor devil, Fairfax?' asks one. 'Oh, one day, crossing the mountains in a fog, with his head in a mist, he had the awkwardness to pitch himself headforemost down the Devil's Ladder, in the Alleghanies,' answers t'other. '*Poor creature!* He was always a miserable—but where was he buried?' 'He wa'n't buried—the crows eat him up,' etc., etc., etc.! Oh! I know what my posthumous fame would be in such a case. Quite different from that of the future Major-General Francis Fairfax, who, fifty years hence, at a good old age, shall die in his downy bed, with the archbishop praying by him, and be buried with the highest honors of war, and have a national monument raised to his fame, emblazoning his immortal services to his grateful country, in receiving her honors and emoluments for more than half a century! Can't give up that glorious future for the sake of dashing myself to pieces this after-

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noon, Clifton. No !" said the young man, folding his arms, and striking an attitude *à-la-Napoleon*, " I have a destiny to fulfill, and shall not stir from this spot until the mist rises or falls."

" Mr. Fairfax ! it is now drawing late in the afternoon. We shall have a storm before night ; and a storm on the mountains, let me tell you, is a much more delightful thing to read about in Childe Harold, while stretched at your ease upon the settee in your shady piazza, than to take in *propriâ personâ* on the Alleghanies," said Captain Clifton, quietly.

" Only warrant me from bringing up suddenly to the jumping-off place before I know it—and I'll make an attempt! Yea ! let him only insure my body unharmed by fire or water, and I'll valiantly follow my leader through flood and flame !" replied Frank, recovering himself with a few more shudders, and preparing to mount.

" We have left the right road about two miles behind," said Captain Clifton, turning his horse's head and leading the way.

The fog below was condensing very fast. From the North-Western horizon black clouds were rising behind masses of foaming white vapor. The air was still and oppressive, and from all around came a faint, low moaning sound, as if nature cowered and trembled before the coming of the terrible "storm king." The fog was now rolling down and gathering into clouds below them—revealing the majestic features of the landscape, mountains, vales and forests, rocks, glens and waterfalls, in wild and magnificent confusion—all wearing now a savage and gloomy aspect under the shadow of the coming storm. Captain Clifton's eye had been constantly on the alert in hope of discovering some mountain cabin, which might shelter them from the fury of the tempest, but as yet his search was unsuccessful—no human dwelling even of the humblest description was to be seen. At length the attention of the travellers was attracted by the faint tingling of a bell—then by the bleating of sheep—and then from the deep clouded glen at their right, sprung up into their path a bell-wether followed by two—five—ten—a whole flock of sheep ; and driven by a girl on a pony ; a little, coarse, sun-burned girl, in a boy's coarse straw hat, and a homespun gown, riding on a little rough-coated, wiry, mountain pony.

" A shepherdess, by all that is romantic," exclaimed Fairfax, vaulting aside to let the sheep pass. Then springing to the side of the rough-coated pony, he doffed his hat to the rider and said—

" My good girl—for the love of Providence, will you tell us where we can find shelter from the storm ?"

The child raised her fine eyes to the stranger's face with the look of a startled fawn—and dropped them again instantly. Fairfax repeated his question. The child stole another furtive glance at the fine gentleman in the very fine uniform, and then at her own coarse raiment, and blushed deeply. But before Fairfax could reiterate his request, she said, quietly

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"Grandfather's cabin is not far off, if you and the other gentleman will come with me."

"With great pleasure—and ten thousand thanks, my dear little girl. Be so good as to lead the way."

The flock of sheep had gone on before. The girl put her pony in motion, and the gentlemen followed—Mr. Fairfax addressing all his conversation to his little companion; and Captain Clifton riding on in silence and abstraction.

The sky was darkening very fast, and great single drops of rain occasionally falling. They quickened their pace, and after riding briskly several hundred yards, came to the head of a glen, deep down in which was seen a small, lone cabin. At this instant the sheet lightning glared from horizon to horizon, followed by a report as of exploded and falling rocks, and then the rain came down in a deluge. The darkness was so dense now as to hide their way. The girl jumped from her pony, and giving him a little slap that sent him travelling down the path, went up to the head of Clifton's horse and said, shyly—

"You can't see the way, sir, and you don't know the road—let me lead your horse."

"By no means, my good girl," replied Clifton, speaking in a tone of haughty astonishment.

Without reply the child turned from him and went towards Fairfax. And at the same instant a thunder-bolt was hurled from Heaven with a terrific crash, riving the ground on which she had just stood. When the panic was over, the first thought of Captain Clifton was for the safety of that presumptuous child. A glare of lightning revealed her lying on the rock. He hastened to her side.

"My dear child, are you hurt," he asked, dismounting and stooping to lift her.

"Oh! sir, I am so glad to hear you speak! I thought you were struck."

"Are you hurt?"

"Oh no, sir, I was only thrown down," replied the child, lightly springing to her feet.

"Oh, yes! Exchange your mutual condolences and congratulations. But who the mischief cares whether I am hurt or not?" exclaimed Fairfax, stumbling along towards them—for he also had dismounted.

"You were entirely out of danger," replied Clifton.

"Out of danger! Who the deuce is out of danger within a hundred miles of these infernal mountains?"

The rain was still pouring down in floods, and in the interval of the thunder, the roar of the swollen torrents was deafening. The question now was, whether to remain standing there exposed to all the fury of the storm, or to attempt the now dangerous descent into the glen.

"I could lead your horses down in safety, if you would let me, for I know every inch of the road so well," said the girl.

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Another blinding glare of lightning, another terrific peal of thunder, and another deluge of rain, put a stop to all reply. At last the child repeated her offer, saying that she could lead the horses down very well, "one at a time." But, of course, that was not for a moment to be thought of by the young men. And her plan was rejected at once.

"Well, then, the only way will be to go down on foot, and leave your horses here to follow. For you will need your hands as well as your feet in groping down the slippery rock through the darkness," said the girl.

After a little more consultation, her last proposition was adopted, and they began the descent on foot.

After some twenty minutes' toil and struggle through darkness and deluge, thunder and lightning, they reached the lowly door of the cabin, pushed it hastily open, and hurried in.

It was very dark, and nothing was to be seen but the red glow of a few smouldering embers on the hearth. Towards these the girl went.

"And what do you think has become of your flock of sheep, my good girl?" inquired Frank, kindly, remembering her interests while he stood there wringing the water out of his coat skirts.

"Oh, the bell-wether has led them all into the pen long ago, sir. They are always safe when they are once in the glen," replied the child, as she lighted a candle.

The sudden glare of the light showed a rude apartment, with an earth floor, log walls, and a fire-place of unhewn stone. On the right of the fire-place stood a poor bedstead, upon which lay a venerable, white-haired old man, covered with a faded counterpane, and near the bed sat an old, chip-bottomed arm-chair. On the left of the fire-place were two rough plank shelves, the lower shelf adorned with a few pewter plates and mugs; the upper one filled with——books!—piles of old dingy, musty books; and near these shelves stood a spinning-wheel, with a broach of yarn on the spindle, and a basket of broaches under it. At the opposite end of the room, one corner was occupied by a little old oak table, and the other by a ladder leading up through a trap-door into the loft overhead. A few rude stools were ranged along the walls, junks of smoked venison, ropes of onions, bunches of dried herbs, hanks of yarn, and the old man's old hat and coat garnished the walls. All this was seen at a glance.

"Is your grandfather sick?" inquired Frank.

The girl turned her eyes wistfully towards the venerable sleeper and did not reply.

"Is your grandfather sick?" repeated Fairfax.

The child raised her eyes sorrowfully to the face of the young man, and remained silent.

"Is he so *very* sick?" earnestly reiterated Frank.

"He is not sick, sir," answered the girl, in a low, sad voice.

"What is the matter with him, then?" thoughtlessly persisted Frank.

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Without reply, the girl dropped her eyes, and blushing deeply, turned away. Setting the candle down upon the table, she took a pail of water and went up the ladder, and into the loft. After an absence of a few minutes, she returned, and said—

"If you will go up stairs now, you will find two suits of grandfather's and Carl's Sunday clothes. They are not fine, but they are clean and dry."

Our wet and jaded travellers thanked their young hostess, and prepared to accept her offer.

"And if," she added, "you would like to rest after so much fatigue, there is a bed."

They reached the loft, and found it a small, low place, with a little window, and a little, clean bed. On the bed lay the two suits of homespun, and two coarse towels. And on a stool near, sat a pail of water and a tin basin.

"I do believe that little girl has given us her own sanctuary. What a dear little thing she is!—so full of courage, and shyness, too! If she were two or three years older, and a great deal prettier, I could fancy myself writing poetry about her," said Frank.

Clifton made no comment—he was engaged in divesting himself of his wet garments, and thinking about Miss Clifton.

When they had refreshed themselves by washing and changing their dress, Frank threw himself upon the bed, stretched out his limbs luxuriously, and declared that the rustic's clothes were very loose and comfortable, and his own position truly delightful. Captain Clifton walked to the window, and looked out at the storm, which was now abating.

Frank was already sound asleep.

And while Clifton stood at the window, drawing comparisons between the meanness of the hut in which he found himself, and the magnificence of the mountain scenery around it, he heard—in that small, shell-like cabin—he could not help hearing—what follows. First a heave and plunge, as if the old man below stairs had started violently from his bed and fallen again, and then a fearful, shuddering voice exclaimed, "Kate! Kate! they're coming again! They're after me, Kate! They're on me! They're on me! Save me, Kate! Save me, Kate! Save—"

"Grandfather—dear grandfather," said the soothing voice of the girl, "there is no one here but me—there, there, be quiet, be still; nothing shall hurt you here—nothing can, you know."

"Look! Look, Kate! Look! They're not men now, but devils!" A violent plunge, struggles, exclamations of terror and despair which the low, soothing tones and gestures of the poor girl vainly essayed to tranquillize for some time, and then—silence for a few minutes—which was again interrupted by—"Snakes! snakes, Kate! Snakes! *Green* snakes! See! see how they dart! They fly! They're on me! They're on me! Help! Help!" And the sound of the maniac laying about him furiously. Captain Clifton started up with the in-

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tention of going to the poor girl's assistance—but by the time he reached the head of the ladder, the voice of the child had again calmed the infuriated man.

All was quiet for a quarter of an hour, and then another violent start and throw that seemed to shake the little hut, and a horrible shriek of—"A dragon! A dragon, Kate! A green dragon belching flame!" Then a succession of violent shrieks and struggles, which aroused Frank, who springing up in bed, exclaimed—

"What the deuce is the matter? Has the Major got another fit of *mania-a-potu* on him?" Then, as all again was quiet, he rubbed his eyes and said, laughing. "I do believe I have been talking in my sleep! I dreamed we were in our mess, and the Major was drunk again."

"A part of your dream was real. The old man below stairs has a fit of *mania-a-potu* upon him."

"What! and you staying here! I must go down and help the girl."

"You had better not as yet. She seems to have the power of soothing him. Your presence might, by exasperating him, do more harm than good."

At this moment another outbreak of fury from the madman caused Frank to spring to his feet, and, exclaiming—

"I can't let that maniac tear my dear little hostess to pieces—" rushed to the head of the ladder.

"I tell you you had best not *intrude*—his mania seems perfectly harmless to the child."

But Frank was at the foot of the ladder, where, however, an impediment met him. The girl, who had just succeeded in again soothing the madman, came and stood before him, saying, "Pray do not come in, sir, just yet."

"But, my good girl, I must come in and remain to protect you," gently trying to pass her. She stood her ground firmly; her *lips* said—

"I am not in any danger. I beg you, sir, do not come in yet;" but her steady and rather threatening *glance* said—"Do not dare to look upon the old man in his degradation!"

Frank turned back, and went and perched himself at the top of the ladder to watch over the safety of the girl, and be ready in case of exigency.

He saw the old man lying, clutching the cover around him, while his terror-dilated eyes glared out like a wild beast's from its lair—all ready for another start and spring! He saw the girl mix a mug of strong vinegar and water, and take it to him, and the old man grasp and quaff it with fiery thirst; three times she filled the mug, and three times he gulped its contents with voracity. Then she laid his aged head tenderly down, and went and saturated a cloth with vinegar, and placed it about his burning forehead and temples. Next she took a rustic fan of turkey feathers and stood by him and fanned him until he fell into a sleep, that every moment became

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deeper and deeper. Finally she gently laid down the fan, sunk upon her knees by the bedside, and bowed her head upon her clasped hands in silent prayer. At last she arose, pressed a light kiss upon the furrowed brow of the sleeper, and silently went about her household work.

From a shed at the back of the house she brought wood and water, made up the fire, filled and hung on the tea-kettle, set an oven and oven-lid to heat, and again disappeared through the back door into the shed. In about fifteen minutes she returned with a tray of dough and a pan of venison steaks. She made her dough into a loaf and put it in the oven to bake, and prepared her venison steaks to lay upon the coals. She set her table with milk and cream, and butter, brought in, doubtless from a rude, but cool spring-house, near at hand.

When all was done, she sat down to knit, seeming to wait the coming of another—for she often paused and listened with her head turned towards the door, and at length got up and drew from under the bed a trunk, whence she took an old, well-patched but clean suit of homespun clothes, with a shirt and a pair of socks, and hung them over a chair.

Soon after a step was heard without—the door was thrown open, and a thin dark young man, dressed as a farm laborer, entered. Throwing his coarse hat to the other end of the room, he approached the fire, when seeing the situation of the old man he stopped short, and placing his arms a-kimbo, gazed on him, exclaiming—

"Drunk again, by ——— !" and then turned, with an interrogative look, towards the girl.

A short wave of the hand—a quick distressful nod, and the choking down of a sob, told him that it was so.

The young man let down his arms, and with a frown of mingled sorrow and anger approached and gazed upon the sleeper.

"Have you had much trouble with him, dear Kate ?"

The same choking sob and quick nod answered him.

"*Where* DID he get the liquor ? What has he laid his hands on and sold now—any of my books ?"

"No ! no !—it was my bonnet—but never mind, I can wear your old hat, you know !—it dosen't matter for me !"

"Well, now, by all that's—"

"Hush, hush, Carl ! Don't swear—he is our grandfather you know ; and besides," she added, suddenly dropping her voice, "there are strangers up stairs."

"Strangers ! What strangers ?"

"Two gentlemen who came in here out of the storm.

"Umph !" said the young man, dropping himself into the arm-chair, and falling into deep thought, from which he was aroused by the voice of Kate, saying—

"Carl, don't sit down in your wet clothes; take those on the chair, and go into the shed and put them on. And make haste, please, Carl, because supper is nearly ready, and the gentlemen up stairs must be hungry."

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The young man arose, with a heavy sigh, saying—

"I'll only change my jacket, that I can do here. Oh! Kate!" he continued, as he divested himself of his wet jacket, and drew on the other—"Oh! Kate! what between one thing and another this is no home for you! *Indeed, indeed*, every morning I go away from you with a heavy heart, and all day long I can hardly work for the dread that's on my mind about you. If I could only find a place for you to wait on some lady, or to nurse a baby—but, Lord! what with the niggers there is never a place to be got here for a poor white girl."

"Oh, Carl, if you could get me the best place in the world—even a place to sew—I wouldn't leave *him*. Why, Carl, it would break his heart. He would grieve himself to death!"

"And better for him that he should be dead! And better for you and all concerned!"

"Oh, don't say so, Carl! Don't say so! Come and look at him, and let the sight soften your heart to him," said the girl, taking the youth's hand, and drawing him to the bedside. "Look, now, at that poor old wrinkled face—it has not got long to live, anyhow—and see the two or three thin, white hairs on his temples—and see the poor, *poor* withered hands—so helpless! Oh! I think it is all so pitiful. And now see, he is asleep, but how much trouble there is on his poor old face—no, no! don't say hard things of him, it cuts me to the heart! And, Carl, no matter how bad his fit may be, he never offers to hurt me or anything else. Only terror and horror is all that is on him! He is a gentle, harmless, poor old man. And I always pity him like I pity any one very ill."

"Kate! I dare say you think this is all tender-heartedness, and you give yourself a great deal of credit for it! But I tell you it's nothing but weakness. And it may be the ruin of you, too, before long. And now I tell you, I'm going to get a place for you, if I can. Yes, and make you go to it, too, I can do without you—that is, I *must* do without you! I can get the breakfast before I go away in the morning. And I can leave something for the old man's dinner, and come home time enough in the evening to get his supper! And to-morrow I am going down to the turnpike gate to thrash Scroggings, and bring your bonnet home. And I'll tell him if ever he lets the old man have any more liquor, I'll kick him round his groggery till he hasn't got a whole bone left in his body. Yes, and I'll do it, too!"

Kate was placing the supper on the table, but she turned, with the same expression of countenance with which she had stopped Fairfax at the foot of the stairs, and said—

"I should be very sorry for any violence from you, Carl. But of one thing be sure—do what you may, I will never, *never* leave our grandfather!"

"There! now, whenever you get that hateful Maria Theresa look, I *hate* you, Katterin! I hate to see strength in women! It don't belong to them, anyhow!"

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"Strength of *affection* does, Carl. But now please call the gentlemen down to supper," said Kate.

Carl rapped at the foot of the ladder, and summoned the travellers accordingly.

Now, though Fairfax had honorably withdrawn from the trap-door, the moment he found that his services would not be required, and that the conversation between Kate and Carl was growing confidential, yet every word of that conversation had been distinctly heard by both young men, and had produced an effect upon both. Frank with difficulty withheld himself from exclaiming aloud, as pity, disgust, anger or approbation moved him in turn. Captain Clifton, far less impressible, and more reserved than his companion, had remained perfectly quiet and silent, though his thoughts were more practically busy with the case than those of his companion. They went down, and were received at the foot of the ladder by Carl, who, with a sort of rough politeness, placed stools at the table, and invited them to be seated. They placed themselves at the board, at the head of which Kate already presided, with folded hands and downcast eyes. Then to their utter astonishment, the rude, irreverent young man, Carl, stood up and asked a blessing, saying, afterwards, that he was no parson, nor no Methodist, but Kate would have it so, and he thought it was best upon the whole, not to oppose females in such notions. And then he began to wait upon his guests.

Their supper consisted of good coffee, with cream and maple sugar; good bread, with fresh butter and cheese; venison steak and broiled chickens; and lastly, of a dish of baked pears, cold, and a pitcher of milk. Frank was surprised to find such excellence of fare amid the ragged poverty of the mountain cabin; but, on afterwards expressing this surprise to Captain Clifton, he was told by the latter, that such contrasts were by no means rare. Mr. Fairfax applied himself with zeal to the good things before him, until the sharpness of his appetite was sated, and then lingered long over the meal, conversing with his host upon the state of the country in his region, the climate and soil, productions, market, etc., and receiving from the young mountaineer the information that there was no great amount of produce about there, except in the glens, grazing for the cattle, and that the roads were so bad, and the towns and villages so distant, that nothing was raised for market, except such kind of produce as could walk thither, to wit, flocks and herds. That his grandfather, before the infirmities of age had come upon him, had raised herds of kine and hogs, which he drove fifty miles to market every year; but that was some years ago, when he himself was a child. That now they only had a few sheep, which his sister tended while he was at work on a plantation at the foot of the mountain. In reply to a question Frank put while leisurely using his gold tooth-pick, the young man informed him farther that himself and his sister were of Ger-

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man and Irish descent. That the old man, their grandfather, was a German by birth, but had lived nearly seventy years in America. That his name was Carl Wetzel, and his only daughter, Caterina, had been married to an Irish emigrant, of the name of Kavanagh. That *they* were the parents of himself and sister. Finally, that they had been dead nearly seven years. It was farther ascertained that old Carl Wetzel had been a man of considerable education; and it was easily seen that Carl Kavanagh had inherited much of his father's Irish quickness of intelligence, and much of his grandfather's German love of knowledge.

Frank, on his part, was equally communicative, and, in spite of the haughty reserve of Captain Clifton, informed his host that he had come up into that neighborhood for the purpose of acting as groomsman at the approaching marriage of his friend, Captain Clifton, of the ——— Regiment of Cavalry, to his cousin, Miss Carolyn Gower Clifton, of Clifton Place. That their journey, so far, had been rather disastrous; that they had set out from Washington City on horseback, but had become so fatigued by the excessive heat, that they had been obliged, on arriving at Winchester, to take places for themselves in the stage for Staunton, and to hire a man to bring their horses after them—riding one and leading the other, and so alternately. That before reaching Staunton, they had been thrown from the stage—without serious injury to themselves, however, and had been obliged to walk some ten miles to a village on their route, and wait the arrival of their horses, which, fortunately, were not many hours behind them. That they had ridden all day in a thick fog, lost their way, came near going over a fearful precipice, and finally got caught in the tempest that drove them for shelter to the cabin.

During all this time, Captain Clifton had seemed lost in thought, and only once spoke to inquire of the young mountaineer whether it were possible for them to pursue their journey that night. To this the young man replied that it would be impossible, even if it were then daylight, inasmuch as the torrents were swollen so greatly. And at the thought of pursuing their journey, a pang of remorse for his forgetfulness of his horse shot through the breast of Frank, and—

"What the devil can have become of Saladin?" he exclaimed, starting up.

"Oh, he is safe," answered Clifton. "I saw them both in the shed as I looked from the little window up stairs."

"Who put them there?"

"I tended them," answered the girl, quietly.

They all now arose from the table. The girl cleared the board, and carried all the things out to wash up. Carl begged his guests to excuse him, and went out to give the horses a rub down and another feed.

Captain Clifton threw himself into the arm-chair, crossed his legs, took out his tablets, and began to make memorandums,

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Frank impertinently peeped over his shoulder and read—"Mem. Ask my mother if she can take a little girl as a companion." Clifton closed the book instantly, in silent rebuke of Frank's impudence. And Frank himself walked about fidgety and unhappy for not knowing what to do with himself, until, at a restless movement of the old man, he went and poured out a mug of water, and carefully keeping behind the eye of the patient, lifted up his head and gave him drink, and after setting down the empty mug, fanned him till he went sound asleep again.

The brother and sister soon returned. Carl sat down and begun his best efforts at entertainment. But Frank, who amused himself by seeing everything, saw Kate go up stairs into the loft and bring down and carry out his own and his friend's regimentals.

After which she came in, and drawing a stool to the table, sat down and began to knit, as quietly, as silently, as if no strangers were in her hut.

Carl took down and laid upon the table a rough draught board, and invited his guests to play with each other.

Frank eagerly caught at the opportunity, but Captain Clifton declined, on the plea of distaste to the amusement.

"Play with me, my dear fellow, for pity sake," said Frank to Carl, "and don't mind my friend there! You see, he doesn't want to play, neither does he want to talk, nor to do anything but sit and think about Miss Clifton.

"Do play with him, and keep him quiet, if you can, my good youth," said Captain Clifton, turning his chair slightly aside from the table, so that his face was in the shade. Opposite to him, at the other corner of the table, sat Katherine with the light shining full upon her face and head, as she bowed it over her work. Captain Clifton did not fall into a brown study, he fell into a study of the brown girl. Let no one presume to misinterpret him. It was not likely that a man of twenty-five should fall in love with a girl of fourteen. Dotards do such things, not men. Then it was utterly preposterous to suppose that Archer Clifton, of Clifton, Captain in the ——— Regiment of Cavalry, the fastidious amateur in female beauty, should be smitten with a hard-featured, sunburned girl, in a coarse, homespun frock, that the all-accomplished scholar should be charmed with the little ignoramus; that the arrogant conservative of rank should condescend to a low-born mountaineer; or that the expectant bridegroom of the beautiful and haughty Carolyn Clifton, of Clifton, should wish to marry a girl who united all those repulsive qualities of ignorance, ruggedness, and low-birth. Yet if he could have looked only two short years into the future!

But Clifton was a physiognomist, and liked to study a novel individuality. A new and very curious object was before him now. At first he had seen in Kate nothing more than a coarse-featured dark-skinned country girl. Now, as he sat

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and watched her at her quiet work, with her countenance in the repose of thoughtfulness, he saw that her features, though certainly not beautiful or classical, were even of a higher order of physiognomy, combining the rarest elements of power and goodness. The broad and massive forehead, straight nose, and square, firm jaws, were the strong and ugly features—the rugged frame work, as it were, of her countenance, and indicated great force of character. But her hair, eyes, and lips were beautiful. Her hair, of rich dark brown, with golden lights, rippled around her forehead, shading and softening its stern strength. Her eyes, large and shadowy, with drooping lashes, and her lips sweetly curved, full, and pensively closed, suggested a profound depth of tenderness. Indeed the brooding brow, the downcast eyes, and the compressed lips seemed to be habitual with her, and gave her countenance an expression of grief and care beyond her years, and of thought and intellect above her station. As Clifton sat and studied her, he thought—not of

> "Full many a flower that's born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air,"

for the girl did not resemble a flower so much as a hardy, pine sapling of her native mountains. No; that look, strength, intellect, and self-balance—in a word—that look of POWER, suggested rather—*girl* as she was—

> "Some village Hampden with undaunted breast,
> * * * * * * *
> Some mute inglorious Milton, * * *
> Some CROMWELL guiltless of his country's blood."

It *was* a Maria-Theresa face without the wickedness.

Captain Clifton's physiognomical studies were interrupted by the abrupt starting of Frank, who exclaimed vehemently,

"Beaten in four games! Now, that's what I call outrageous! Don't you know, my dear fellow, that there are three persons in the world who should never be beaten—a guest, a woman, and a monarch?"

Carl laughed and chuckled, and beating the draught-board tambourine-like above his head in triumph, carried it off and put it away.

The whole party then arose to retire. Carl took the candle and showed his guests up into the loft and left them to repose.

"Now where will that child sleep, for we have got her room?" asked Frank, with concern, as soon as they were alone.

"Oh-h!" replied Captain Clifton, indifferently, "anywhere—on a pallet—perhaps, down stairs."

"But the old man and the young one—"

"Oh-h!" again drawled Clifton, in a bored tone, "if you expect to meet with refinement among the mountain people, you will be disappointed."

Long after the travellers had lain down to rest, they heard

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the sound of footsteps moving about in the room below. They moved quietly and cautiously, as if fearful of disturbing the guests; but, as I said before, all sounds, even the lowest, could be distinctly heard through that shell of a house.

On awaking the next morning, the young men found their own clothes well cleaned, dried, and pressed, ready for them to put on.

"Ah, ah!" said the sagacious Frank, "that is what the poor girl was at work at so late last night."

On going down stairs they found the lower room neatly arranged, and breakfast ready for them—hot coffee, corn cone, hot rolls, rashers of fried bacon, eggs, potatoes, etc. And there, in the arm-chair, in a clean homespun suit, sat the old man, looking as calm, as self-possessed, as noble and venerable as a Roman senator. He arose and bowed to the gentlemen, and offered his chair to one of them.

No wonder it bowed the young girl's head with grief and shame—it pained and humbled even these strangers, to know that this most reverenced white-haired patriarch was often transformed by drunkenness into the beast! It was a disease, Kate had often said, wringing her hands with anguish, while seeing his degradation.

It *was* a disease, and never till vice is treated as such, will an effectual remedy be applied.

Immediately after breakfast, the gentlemen took leave of the family, and mounted their horses to pursue their journey. Frank, in the thoughtless kindness of his heart, would have offered the poor people some remuneration for their entertainment, but Clifton, who knew the habits and feelings of the mountaineers better, arrested a purpose that might have given offence. But on parting with Carl Kavanagh, Captain Clifton expressed his thanks for the hospitality that had been extended to himself and friend—adding, that if he could then, or at any time, in any manner, be of use to his kind host, he should be happy to serve him, etc., etc. To this the young man replied—

"I thank you, sir. I know Captain Clifton by report, and feel that I can trust to his generosity. I have a heavy care—my young sister. If you could hear of a place at service for her among the honorable ladies of your family or acquaintance, I should feel very grateful indeed, sir."

Captain Clifton kindly gave his promise to make inquiries. Frank again shook hands with Carl, bowed to Kate, nodded to the old man through the window, and then the travellers turned from the door of the mountain hut, cantered briskly up the glen, and took the road to WHITE CLIFFS.

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CHAPTER II.

CLIFTON AND THE BEAUTIES.

"Against the cliffs
See'st thou not where the mansion stands? The moonbeam
Strikes on the granite column, and tall trees
Group shadowy round it."—ANONYMOUS.

A most portentous trial waits thee now—
Woman's bright eyes and dazzling snowy brow.—MOORE.

THE torrents had been so terribly swollen and overflowed, and the roads so dreadfully washed and guttered by the tempest and flood of the preceding evening, that the travellers found the greatest difficulty in pursuing their journey, often having to turn back miles on this road to take another way, and often being obliged to search leagues up and down the course of a river, to find a practicable ford.

Therefore it was near night-fall when they crossed the last range of forest-crowned mountains, and descended into the wooded valley that lay between them and White Cliffs. A winding road through the woods brought them to the house. The full moon was rising East of the cliffs, and casting their shadow back across the house and lawn. The mansion was a lofty edifice of white stone, with terraced roof, and many irregular, projecting wings. The tall trees surrounding the buildings, the lofty cliffs rising behind them, the dark shadow falling on all; the hour, the silence, and the solitude, gave an air of refreshing coolness and deep repose to the scene. On turning an angle of the building, they saw the drawing-room windows open, and the light from them gleaming out cheerfully across that part of the lawn. At that moment a servant, waiting at the hall door, came down to take their horses.

"All well at home, Dandy?" inquired Captain Clifton, as he dismounted, and threw him the reins.

"Sarvint, sir! All very well," replied the man, touching his hat.

Captain Clifton led the way up into the hall adjoining the drawing-room, where they were met by an old gentleman, who seized both of Clifton's hands, and shook them slowly and cordially, as he said, dropping each word separately, with a hearty, luscious emphasis—

"Why—my—dear—boy—how glad I am—to see you!"

"And I am very happy to be with you, sir; and to find you looking so well. Allow me to introduce to your acquaintance—Lieutenant Fairfax, of my company," said Captain Clifton, presenting his friend.

"Glad to see you! Glad to see Mr. Fairfax! Glad to welcome any friend of my nephew's to Clifton. How do you do, sir? Knew your relative, Lord Fairfax, of Greenway Court-house. Excessively fond of hunting. Kept bachelor's hall. Very great mistake, that—very! Hope you won't follow his

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example! Fine man, however, and I honor his memory! Come in, sir! come in! Come in, Archy! My—dear—boy—I'm—so—del—*ighted* to see you!"

Whenever he spoke to his nephew, he seemed to dwell upon each separate syllable with a cordiality impossible to describe.

He was a large, old gentleman, clothed in a fresh, fragrant suit of pale blue linen, with his hair as white as cotton, his fresh, rosy complexion, fine teeth, and clear, kind, blue eyes, making a most refreshing picture of simplicity, cheerfulness, and cleanliness of soul and body in old age. He was of a sanguine temperament, and under great provocation, could get into a passion, too. And what old father of a family, with two grown daughters, and a young wife, all under eighteen years of age, and all beauties, has not enough combustible material to burn the house down, or set his own temper on fire?—yet such was the kindness of his heart, that even when in violent anger, stamping up and down the floor, grasping desperately at his own white temple locks with both hands, and vociferating in stentorian tones—it was all, as Frank afterwards said, *shooting with blank cartridges*—he never said a word, or did a thing, to wound a single soul.

"I trust the ladies are all well, sir," said Captain Clifton, as he followed his uncle.

"Yes—yes—that is to say, *Carry* is well, but not well *pleased*. She expected you yesterday—didn't consider the storm any excuse for your absence. Ah! you dog—you sad dog—at your age would I have kept a lady waiting? Nay, would I do it *now?* But come, shall I present you to the ladies now, or do you prefer first the refreshment of the bath, and a change of dress? Your own and your friend's baggage arrived this morning by the waggon, and has been conveyed to your rooms."

"Oh, a change of dress, by all means!" suggested Frank.

"Dandy—DANDY!" exclaimed the old gentleman, raising his strong voice, till the servant appeared, "show Mr. Fairfax to General Washington's room."

General Washington had slept one night at Clifton, and from that time to this, the room he occupied has been "General Washington's room."

The servant conducted Mr. Fairfax up stairs. And then the old gentleman, turning to his nephew, took his hands again, and said—

"My dear boy, once more I must say, I'm—so—*glad*—to—see you! *You* are at home, you know. So go and find your room, and ring and give your orders, *my son*, for you are so. And I will go and let the ladies know that you have come, though I dare say they know it already."

And shaking his hands, he let them go and turned slowly away.

Half an hour sufficed the young gentlemen to make themselves presentable. At the end of which time they descended

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the stairs, and were met in the hall by old Mr. Clifton, who ushered them into the drawing-room.

This apartment was a most delightful summer room. It was very spacious, occupying the whole first floor of one of those irregular wings of the house. The ceiling was lofty, the walls were covered with pearl white paper, and the floor of white oak was waxed and polished to an ivory smoothness. On three sides were tall windows, reaching to the floor, and opening out upon the piazza or the lawn, and draped with snowy, flowing curtains. On the fourth side was the open fire-place, whitened inside, and having on its marble hearth an alabaster vase of lilies, whose fragrance filled the air. The walls were adorned with tall mirrors, and with choice paintings, all of a cool, refrigerating character, such as: An Alpine Scene, A Green Forest Glade, with Deer Reposing, a Mountain Lake, A Shaded Pond, with Cows, A Farm Yard in a Snow Storm, etc. A piano stood at the farthest end of the room. A harp reclined near it. A few marble-topped stands and tables, scattered over with rare prints, books, *virtu bijouterie*, etc., stood at convenient distances. A lady's elegant work-table, with its costly trifles, was a pleasing feature in the room. Sofas, ottomans, divans, and lounging chairs, "fitted to a wish for study or repose," were everywhere at hand.

Through the open windows came the evening wind, laden with the fragrance of flowers, the murmur of falling waters, the whisper of leaves, and the cherry chirp of insects—those night songsters who begin when the birds go to sleep—nature's vesper choir. While *from* the open windows could be darkly seen the tall shadowy trees, the towering white cliffs, and, in the distance, a bend of that great river which took its rise here, and which there sleeping among the dark green hills, with the moon shining full upon it, seemed a resplendent mountain lake, flashing back the moonbeams from its bosom in rays of dazzling light. The whole effect of the room and the scene was delightfully cooling and refreshing.

When Mr. Clifton conducted his guests into this saloon, it was occupied by three young ladies, who, immediately on their entrance, arose to receive them; and whom, in presenting his visitors, Mr. Clifton severally named as, My wife, Mrs. Clifton,—my daughter, Miss Clifton, and my second daughter, Zuleime. Captain Clifton, in turn, saluted his aunt and cousins. Miss Clifton, his betrothed, received him with cold hauteur.

So, these were the beauties—and beautiful, passing beautiful, they were indeed, though differing from each other in beauty, as "one star differs from another in glory." But let me describe them.

Carolyn Clifton is tall and elegantly proportioned, and moves with high-bred dignity. Her features are Grecian—her complexion is dazzlingly fair, save when the pure rich blood mantles in her cheek, and crimsons the short and scorn-

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ful lip. Her eyes are blue, and half veiled by their fair lashes, as in disdain of aught that might seek their glance. Her fair hair is carried up from her forehead, and falls in bright tendril-like curls around the back of her neck, leading an intellectual and queenly grace to the proud head. The costume of that day closely resembled the prevailing mode of our own. Miss Clifton wore a dress of a pale blue silk, made low in the neck, with a long-wasted stomacher, tight sleeves reaching to the elbows, and ample flowing skirt. The neck was trimmed with a fall of deep lace, then called a "tucker," and answering to the present *berthe.* The tight half-sleeves were trimmed at the elbows by deep lace ruffles, shading the arm. A necklace of large strung pearls around her throat, a bracelet of the same on her arm, and a pearl-headed pin run through the Grecian knot of ringlets at the back of her head, completed her toilet. She carried in her hand and toyed carelessly with a beautiful fan of marabout feathers. She was the daughter of the *first* Mrs. Clifton, of Clifton, a fair, proud Maryland lady, one of the haughty Gowers, who lived long enough to augment by precept and example, the double portion of family arrogance Carolyn Clifton had inherited from both sides of her house. Miss Clifton had "received her education" at a first-class "Ladies' Institute" at Richmond.

Zuleime, the younger sister, was about fourteen years of age, but well grown and full-formed for her years. She was the daughter of the second Mrs. Clifton, a beautiful West Indian Creole, who died in giving her life. She had the snowy skin and damask cheek of her father's fair race, and the glittering black hair and sparkling black eyes of her Creole mother. Her dress was of plain white muslin, with short sleeves and low neck, and coral necklace, which well set off the exceeding brilliancy of her complexion. Zuleime was home for the mid-summer holidays.

Mrs. Clifton, of Clifton, Georgia!

"Yes, she is indeed the most beautiful woman in the whole world," exclaimed Fairfax, to himself, as he turned from the fair and dignified Carolyn—the brilliant and sparkling Zuleime, to the dark and graceful Georgia. She is of medium height. Her complexion is a rich, dark, uniform olive, her very cheeks being of the same hue, but so transparently clear, that that which would mar the perfection of another face, adds deeper beauty to hers. Yes! the delicate bloom of the fair Carolyn, and the bright damask blush of the brilliant Zuleime, seem common-place beside the perfect beauty of the pure, clear olive cheeks of the dark Georgia. Her hair is intensely black, with depths under depths of darkness, lurking in the labyrinths of irregular curls that cluster around, and throw so deep a shadow over her witching face. Her eyebrows are black and arched. Her eyelashes are long, black and drooping. Her eyes are—pause—I have been trying to

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think of something to which her wondrous eyes may be compared, for darkness, profundity and power. Midnight? No, her eyes are darker, stiller, and more solemn yet. Thunder clouds? No, for her eyes are more stormy and impending still—and their electric stroke is silent as it is fatal. In short, her eyes resemble nothing but themselves. Her dress is of black gauze, over her black silk, made high to veil her neck, and finished with a narrow black lace, within which gleams around her throat a necklace of jet and gold. She wears no other jewellery. A large black lace mantilla is carelessly thrown over all. When she moves her every movement is undulating grace—her motion might be set to music. And when she sits still she is *so* still, and dark, and beautiful—*and something else besides,* that the gazer experiences something like the fascination and terror one feels in looking down the depths of a dark chasm.

She was the daughter of a portrait painter in Richmond, and this was what Captain Archer Clifton, in his arrogance, called humble parentage. Mr. Clifton had met her under the following circumstances: On finally withdrawing his eldest daughter from school, he wished, before carrying her home, to have her portrait taken, and went for that purpose to the studio of Mr. Fuller, portrait and miniature painter, where he chanced to see her for the first, time, the artist's beautiful child, Georgia. He took so strong a fancy to this bewitching creature, that he delayed his departure—prolonging his stay in the city for three weeks, at the end of which, besides the accomplished Miss Clifton, with her elegant wardrobe, splendid jewels, costly presents, and finished portrait—he took home the artist's daughter as the fourth Mrs. Clifton, of Clifton, much to the indignation of the haughty Carolyn, who never ceased to treat her beautiful young stepmother with scorn and contempt.

Supper was announced, and the old gentleman, rising, requested his nephew to lead in his wife, while he himself, took the arm of his eldest daughter, and left Zuleime to Mr. Fairfax. They crossed the hall and entered a large and pleasant dining-room, where stood an elegant table, laid with a damask table-cloth, set out with silver plate, and Sèvres porcelain, and laden "with all the luxuries of the season." Waiters of perfect dress and *ad*dress were in attendance.

"I assure you, Miss Zuleime, that contrast is all the seasoning of existence—and *this* is a high seasoning. For yesterday we sat down to eat supper off of pewter plates, on a bare board, in a mean hut, in company with rude mountaineers, and to-night we sit at the elegant tea-table of Clifton, surrounded with beautiful, refined, and accomplished ladies," said Frank, as he handed his lively companion into her chair, and took the seat by her side.

The sprightly Zuleime laughed, and said she doubted whether he would find more substantial or savory fare here than he got at the mountain hut.

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After all were seated, and all served, the conversation became general and vivacious—old Mr. Clifton being evidently "the life of the company." He chatted, jested, laughed, told anecdotes, and finally, inspired Frank, who gave a laughable description of their adventures on the Alleghanies; of being upset in the stage-coach, and pitched into Wolf's Lick; of being lost in the fog, and near going down the Devil's Staircase; finally, of being caught in the tempest, and shut up in a mountain-hut with a raving maniac. At this the old gentleman began to rally his proud daughter on her gratuitous ill-humour of the preceding evening, at the said delay, and then to scold the young men for their effeminacy and want of gallantry and courage, in suffering themselves to be deluged by the storm. Now, to be charged, all at once, with effeminacy, and want of gallantry, and courage, even in jest, was too much, and in Frank's case, too near the truth to go without reply. So he began vehemently to clear his fame, assuring the assembled company that it was *not* altogether effeminacy, for that they had been hospitably sheltered in the cabin of a beautiful shepherdess.

"Yes," said Frank, maliciously, "*so* beautiful that *Clifton* there couldn't keep his eyes off her, and while I sat and played checkers with her brother, he sat and studied her face, 'and it were a book'—*for hours.* I wish you had seen him, Miss Clifton—

> "'Never gazed the moon
> Upon the water as he sat and read
> As 'twere her eyes.'

Fact my dear lady, and I should be guilty of misprison of treason, to conceal it!" laughed Frank, shaking his head at his friend.

"Ah-h-h! H-a-a-ah!—are you *there*, my fine fellow!" chuckled the old gentleman, gleefully rubbing his hands, and pointing his finger at his nephew, greatly enjoying his discomfiture.

"I assure you, sir," began Captain Clifton, gravely.

"Oh! don't assure *me!* don't assure *me!* Assure Carolyn! What d'ye think o' that, Carolyn? What d'ye think o' that? More cause for ill-humor last night, than ye thought, eh! What think o' that?" he continued, mercilessly.

And Carolyn—

> "Oh, what a deal of scorn looked beautiful
> In the contempt and anger of her lip!"

There are some women who cannot bear jest upon such subjects—who cannot tolerate that their lovers should look with common curiosity—far less gaze with interest or admiration "for hours," upon any other young female face. And such a woman was Carolyn Gower Clifton. Captain Clifton knew this, and adoring her above all things, silently wished Frank and the mountain girl both at the bottom of the Devil's Staircase.

The old gentleman chatted and laughed; Frank jested and

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blundered; the sprightly Zuleime sparkled and overflowed with fun and frolic, and the meal went on merrily, notwithstanding.

When supper was over they adjourned to the airy summer drawing-room, where they distributed themselves according to their several humors. Miss Clifton passed imperiously down the room, and took her seat upon a distant divan. Captain Clifton followed, with a troubled air, and sat down on the low ottoman at her feet. They doubtless thought—if they thought at all—that they were in a very obscured nook. But Frank had the impertinence to see them. There sat the haughty and scornful girl, with chin erect, lip curled, and eyelids cast down in disdain upon her suppliant. And there sat Archer Clifton, with his high, proud face turned up to hers, with an earnest, pleading, passionate gaze!

"Now, by the venom of Cupid's shaft!" exclaimed Frank, to himself, "I cannot see what Clifton finds to worship in that arrogant girl. If it were this bright, warm Zuleime here, now! But *her!* I might really suspect *him* of being a fortune-hunter, and *her* of being an heiress, if I didn't know that Archer Clifton is himself the heir of the entailed estate of Clifton, and that if his uncle were to die to-night, he might, if he pleased, turn all these penniless women out of the house to-morrow! Can't understand it, for my life! But I suppose the bond of sympathy between them is their name and their pride!"

"Do you find talking to yourself a very amusing pastime, Mr. Fairfax," asked Zuleime, touching him on the elbow.

"No, my dear, delightful little girl, I don't. What a delightful thing, in a country house, is a beautiful girl of fourteen, home for the holidays—a black-eyed, red-lipped girl, in a white muslin gown and a coral necklace!"

"Are your soliloquies as good natured as your conversation, Mr. Fairfax," inquired the laughing Zuleime.

"Not quite, I'm afraid, my dear."

"Do you know how to play chess, Mr. Fairfax?" she asked, opening the chess-board.

"I know how to play *anything* you wish me to play, my love—even the fool!"

"*Oh!* the latter is not so rare or difficult an accomplishment," laughed the maiden, taking her seat, and beginning to arrange the chess-men. Frank sat down, and they commenced the game in earnest.

All this time the old gentleman, with his white head and rosy face, and kind smile and glance, had been walking leisurely up and down the floor slowly, rubbing his hands with an air of great enjoyment—pausing now by the work-table at which sat his beautiful wife, and gazing on her fondly while he toyed with the elegant trifles of her work-box—then sauntering off towards the chess-table, and patting the head of his "little black-headed darling"—as he called Zuleime—or passing a jest with Frank as he overlooked the game—until the

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boy came from the post-office somewhat late; when taking the paper he went and ensconced himself in an easy-chair on the opposite side of his wife's work-table, and was soon busied in the perusal of the debate on Mr. Jefferson's bill for cutting off entails. Frank felt very much pleased that the old boy, as he mentally called him, was quieted at last, and that he himself had at length an opportunity of initiating his charming companion into the mysteries of flirtation, while she imparted to him the secrets of chess.

The room was now very quiet. And Frank was soon deeply immersed in his game. Yes—the room was very quiet, it seemed the sanctuary of domestic love and happiness! At one extremity sat the betrothed lovers, conversing in a low tone, softer than the hum of far-off bees. At the other extremity sat the graceful young wife, placidly pursuing her quiet work, and seeming more like the darling spoiled child of the old man, her husband, who sat reading by her side, and whose kind eyes often wandered from the paper and rested fondly upon her. About midway of the room, sat Frank and his bright companion, too deeply interested in their chess to notice the happy lovers, or to observe the quiet contentment of the old man with his beautiful darling. Yes, this room seemed a temple of domestic truth and trust—of family peace and joy. At least so thought Frank, until raising his eyes from his game, his glance chanced to fall for an instant upon the face of Mrs. Clifton.

It might have been the darkness of her surroundings which threw into such strong relief that fearful countenance, for the black dress and flowing black mantilla veiled all her form, while the clustering deep black curls darkly shaded her face. Her form was turned from the table and bent over the arm of the chair—her bosom was heaving, her lips apart and humid, her nostrils slightly distended, and her eyes, those dreadful eyes, fixed with a passionate, fierce, devouring gaze upon some distant object.

Frank impulsively followed the direction of that consuming gaze, to where the betrothed lovers sat fully reconciled. Clifton, unconscious of all eyes, but those blue orbs that smiled so graciously upon him, was pressing Carolyn's hand to his lips in an ecstacy of love and gratitude. Frank turned again to Mrs. Clifton. Her countenance had changed as by the passage of a thunder-cloud. Her bosom was still as death. Her brow and cheek was darkened, her teeth and lips clenched together, her eyes fixed upon the lovers with the baleful glare of a demon. If the head of the fabled Medusa had suddenly met his astonished gaze, he could not have felt a deeper thrill of horror. And yet it was only a look—that look of an instant—it came and went like the swift swooping past of a fiend's wing—but the shadow on all things seemed to remain. No more did that room seem the blessed retreat of household faith and love—no! a deadly serpent lay coiled among

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its flowers—a deadly poison lurked in its cup of joy—the shadow of a demon's wing was brooding in the air—the house was CURSED.

Frank was of a highly honorable nature, but nervous and impressible—he could no longer confine his attention to the game; he misplayed awkwardly—ridiculously. Zuleime laughed at him—and her silver laughter struck almost unpleasantly upon his ear. He lost the game, and finally, complimenting his young antagonist upon the excellence of her own play—an excellence which he admitted he had not fully brought out—Frank arose from the table and sauntered out into the piazza, exclaiming inwardly—"Ugh! I believe in Satan, since I've seen that woman! Ugh! Whe-ew! Every time I think of her I shall feel hot and smell brimstone!" I said that Frank was of an extremely impressible nature. He stood now upon the piazza at the back of the house, and the majestic crescent of cliffs was before him. The quiet of the night, the freshness of the dew, the coolness of the breeze, the beauty and sublimity of the mountains rising from their girdle of forest, with their peaks bathed in moonlight—the distant glimpse of the bend in the river, where it lay like a silver lake among the hills—the divine peace and holiness of nature fell soothingly, refreshingly upon his excited nerves. And after sauntering up and down the piazza for some twenty minutes, he returned to the parlor in a happier mood. There he found the family grouped around the table on which sat a silver basket of pine-apples with cut-glass plates, and silver fruit knives, and napkins.

"Come, Mr. Fairfax, my dear fellow, we are waiting for you," said the old gentleman, beckoning him.

Frank joined them at the table, and after this repast was over, the family separated and retired to bed.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. CLIFTON, OF HARDBARGAIN.

She is a lady of confirmed honor, of an unmatchable spirit, and determinate in all virtuous resolution; not hasty to anticipate affront, nor slow to feel where just provocation is given.—CHARLES LAMB.

CLIFTON by the morning sunlight! Oh! that I could show it to you as Fairfax saw it from the balcony of his chamber on the morning after his arrival! The whole face of the country was very high, yet even this elevated land was broken into hills and valleys, rocks and glens. Behind the house arose the white cliffs so often mentioned, shutting out the Northern view, but before the house lay the valley in which the plantation was situated, and round that, East, West and South, stretched a magnificent panorama, ridge beyond ridge of mountains, covered with gigantic forests, clothed with the richest verdure, rolling on until they gradually faded away in

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the distance, their forms lost among the clouds of the horizon. It seemed a vast, boundless ocean of greenery, of which the vales and mountains were the stupendous waves, charmed to sleep.

It was a magnificent solitude. Not a human dwelling to be seen. The planters' mansions—if there were any in the neighborhood, were low in the vales, and hidden from sight. The mountain torrent, as it came leaping down the side of the cliff, running through the wooded lawn, losing itself in the forest vale, and reappearing as a mountain lake among the distant hills, was a beautiful feature in the landscape. The deep intense blue of the clear skies, the early splendor of the sun-light, the murmur of the breeze among the waving trees, the joyous songs of birds, gladdened all the scene, and put to flight Frank's blue devils, long before Dandy called him to breakfast.

The breakfast-table was set in the lawn under the shadow of the pine elms.

The old gentleman, in his suit of cool white linen—the sisters in neat morning dresses of white cambric, and the dark Georgia, in her usual dress of black, were assembled on the piazza. They greeted Mr. Fairfax with a lively welcome, telling him that Clifton had not yet made his appearance. But even while they spoke, Captain Clifton joined them, and they sat down to breakfast. Those breakfasts on the lawn! How many times in after years, in the sultry heat of the city hotel, did Fairfax recall them.

Soon after breakfast, Captain Clifton invited Mr. Fairfax to accompany him in a ride up the ridge to his mother's farm. And after taking leave of the ladies they set out. They left the house by the back way, and took a winding bridle-path up the side of the cliffs. The day was very fine and cool, and their path was shaded by overhanging trees. It was altogether a delightful ride, and as they went up, Clifton, who led the way, turned his head around and inquired—

"Frank! what instigated you to romance so last night about our sojourn at the mountain hut?"

"Romance? I didn't romance, except in saying that the girl was beautiful. I said *that* for your credit!"

"Oh! I ought to be *exceedingly* obliged to you!"

"Yes—I think so, too—but what malicious Puck gave *you* a love-weed, and fooled you into sitting and studying that ugly little girl's hard face all the evening?"

"I did not think her ugly at all. She has a noble countenance. A *most* noble countenance. One, of which an empress might be proud!"

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! *I* saw nothing but a mountainous forehead, and a strong portcullis jaw! 'Noble!' Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! I said you'd taken the love-powder!"

"Yet even you cannot find any but a *noble* smile in speaking of her 'ugly' features!"

"Ah! what will Miss Clifton think of this admiration?"

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"Sir, Miss Clifton has my deepest homage, and when she is my wife, she will indulge no follies. But, Fairfax, you are absurd, and I beg you will abandon this ridiculous conversation. You know that I have always had a proclivity to the study of character. Nature made me something of a physiognomist. And if there be any truth in my favorite science, that mountain girl's face presented the most extraordinary combination of power and goodness I have ever met with."

"Oh! then you only studied the maiden as the botanist would study a new plant, the geologist a new fossil, or the naturalist a strange animal?—"

—"Or the astronomer a new STAR? Precisely, sir! Except that the human being is the highest and most absorbing study of all!"

"Really! really! this passes belief—the proud, fastidious Archer Clifton, to be smitten with an ugly mountain girl!"

"Frank! Nonsense—you really anger me. Listen, then, and I will tell you why that child—for she is but a child—interested me so much. I saw in her face the signs of wonderful force of character, as yet undeveloped, and I saw in all her actions that which corroborated their testimony. I was, surprised to find all that in the humble mountaineer, and speculated as to what, in her *very* humble situation, it might lead. That was simply all!"

"And did you not wish to be a providence to the mountain girl, and open a field for so much energy?"

"Perhaps such a thought might have presented itself to my mind. If so, it was dismissed at once. A highly gifted *man* of low birth must have extraordinary talents indeed and be placed in extraordinary circumstances, to elevate himself above his condition—for a *girl* in such a case it is impossible. But, Fairfax, really this conversation has taken a more serious tone than I designed it should. Really, nobility of character, though very rare among the lower classes of society, is yet not so impossible as to excite our wonder. There are others like Kate Kavanagh—"

"How pat you've got her name! Now *I* had forgotten it!"

"Pooh! I say there are others like her. They are born great—they live and die, and the world hears nothing of them. And talents that might have swayed the counsels of a monarch, and decided the destinies of an empire, have been employed to direct the household of a shepherd, and determine the fate of a sheep! Such is the order of society, and better, far better so, than that its boundaries should be thrown down, its rank intermingled!"

"There spoke a Clifton of Clifton!" said Frank.

They were now at the top of the ridge, and entering upon a hard, stony, half-reclaimed farm, in the midst of which stood a rude, but substantial house, built of hewn rocks of every shade of gray, and surrounded by trees. Below them, all around, rose the forest-crowned hills; behind them the white

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cliffs concealed the mansion of Clifton from their sight, all round them lay fields of stunted corn.

"This is Hardbargain," said Captain Clifton, opening a rude farm gate, and holding it open, while his companion passed through.

"Hardbargain! a most appropriate name! I should think it the hardest of all bargains, to receive this farm as a precious gift," replied Frank, looking around upon the stony field and stunted corn.

"Yes," admitted Captain Clifton, "it is a well-merited title. It was once called Rocky Ridge. A poor man got a grant of it, and settled there first—spent all his health and strength in trying to bring the rugged soil under cultivation—failed—christened the place Hard*scrabble*, and sold it to my grandfather for thrice its value. My grandfather repented the purchase, re-christened the ill-starred farm Hard*bargain*, and, as the Clifton estate was entailed upon his eldest son, gave this farm as a portion to his younger son, my father. My father was then a subaltern officer in the Continental Army, and absent with Washington, at Valley Forge. My mother, with myself, then an infant, was a temporary sojourner at Clifton. No sooner had my grandfather made a gift to my father of this nearly barren farm, than my mother set all her faculties of work for its cultivation and improvement. My mother was nearly penniless, being the daughter of a family of decayed fortune. My father was unable to send her anything except the Continental notes, with which he himself was paid, but which would scarcely pass farther. But being determined not to eat the bread of dependence by remaining at Clifton after my grandfather's death, my mother sold all her jewellery and plate, which had been left her by a deceased maiden aunt, and applied the proceeds of the sale to the improvement of Hardbargain. She hired laborers. There was a rude log hut, built by the first settler upon the land. She hired a woman, and placed her in that hut to keep house and cook for them. She read books on agriculture, and consulted my uncle's overseer upon the same subject. And every morning she rode up and spent the day at Hardbargain, overlooking the laborers. She was her own overseer! Frank! you appreciate high worth when you see it. I may, besides, tell you anything—you are my only companion—I tell you that my dear mother was one in ten thousand. She was a true heroine, a heroine of domestic life. Abandoning all her habits of elegance and refinement, despising luxury, ease and comfort, disdaining the sneers of the world, and giving herself to toil and hardship, and weariness of body and mind, that she might win from the desert an independent home for her family! My dear mother had no reason to suppose, and never admitted the possibility that my uncle would not be blessed with a male heir, that *I*, her son, for whom she toiled to secure a rugged farm, would be the inheritor of entailed Clifton! And so

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she toiled, year after year, until at the end of the war, when the army was reduced, and my father came home, he found a comfortable house, and a productive farm."

Clifton seemed to have fallen into one of his fits of reminiscence; scarcely conscious that he was talking to his true but volatile friend, scarcely conscious that he was talking *at all*, he went on—

"My first recollection of my dearest mother, is of a very noble looking lady, of dark complexion, black hair, and gray eyes. I recollect, when an infant of four years old, being brought out from the mansion house of Clifton every morning, to the back road gate, where she sat upon her horse awaiting me, with a little basket, containing our dinner, hanging on the horn of the saddle. I used to be lifted to the saddle before her, and while her left arm encircled me, with her right hand she would guide her horse around the base of the cliff, and take the winding bridle-path that led up the Rocky Ridge, upon which lay her sterile farm of Hardbargain. Oh! I remember how she used to ride from field to field, making investigations, and giving directions to her rude workmen—and with what deference the rough men were used to address her—hat in hand. I remember, too, our cold dinners, taken under the shade of an elm tree, whose lowest branches sheltered a fine spring—the head waters of that very torrent, which, in course of time and space, swells into the mighty river I told you of. Oh! my noble mother! how few would have displayed her courage and fortitude!—not one in a million but would have rather sat down in the luxurious ease and abundance of Clifton, where she had a long welcome for as long as she should choose to stay—rather than have dared the toil and hardship that she endured. The land was at last cleared up, the farm laid off in order, and brought under the best possible cultivation. A comfortable house was built, and my mother moved into it to receive my father when he should come home, at the disbanding of his company. He came at last—it was a happy time—and well I remember how my mother's young, but stern and weather-beaten face, bloomed and softened again into youth and beauty and womanhood, by her soldier's side. But, ah! he had survived all the horrible perils and sufferings by cold, hunger, and the foe, endured by our army during that long and terrible struggle, and returned safe, to die in a time of peace—to die at home, where every care and comfort surrounded him. Yes, he came home in the winter of —82. Towards the spring, he took a slight cold—it was neglected as of little account—it settled upon his lungs—before winter came again, he died, and the first snow that fell, fell upon his grave. My honored mother was a strong-minded woman. After what I have told you, you know that she was! She loved him as only the strong can love. She suffered as only the strong can suffer. She rose above that death-blow to her happiness as only the strong can rise. But

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she has never been the same woman since. When a few years had passed, and her son's welfare demanded her care, she aroused every faculty of her mind and body, for the 'purpose of insuring' his greatest good. Even at that epoch of time, there was no reason to suppose that I should inherit the Clifton estate. My uncle was then in the prime of manhood, had married his second wife, and by no means despaired of male issue. My dear mother taxed soul, body and estate to the utmost, to defray my expenses at college, during the seven years of my residence there. It was also to her persevering exertions, as well as to the late military services of my deceased father, that I owed my commision in the army. They say that *misfortunes* never come single. *Good fortune* certainly never does, if I may judge of our own experience of both. When I had left college, the heaviest tax was raised from our income, and when I obtained a commission in the army, my year's pay more than doubled the annual income from the proceeds of the farm. At this time also my mother received a legacy from an aged and distant relative, which enabled her to stock her farm well, and furnish her house comfortably. Furthermore, my uncle having lost his *third* wife, and at last given up all thoughts of a son of his own, began to take quite a paternal interest in me—insisting, when off duty, I should spend all my time with him—and finding neither myself nor my mother disposed to forego each other's society, would have persuaded the latter to take up her abode under his roof. But that arrangement did not suit my mother. She, who in her young womanhood had too high a spirit for dependence—preferring to give herself to severest toil and privation, rather than live in easy luxury under another's roof—could not in her stern maturity be bribed to give up her well-earned independence. Nor indeed, under any circumstances, should I have consented to the plan. We compromised the matter by my agreeing to spend half the time of furlough at Clifton. This was the more congenial to my feelings, as my cousin Carolyn had now left school permanently. As for my uncle, he consoled himself for his disappointment in not getting my mother's society at Clifton, by marrying a fourth wife."

"I am impressed with the idea that your mother is a very proud woman, Clifton!" said Frank, taking advantage of Captain Clifton's first thoughtful pause.

"No, no," he answered, slowly, as in half reverie, "no—she is not what the world calls proud—she is no conservator of rank, as I am. She is the only *true* republican I know in this whole Republic. Sprung, herself, from an ancient, noble, and haughty race, she yet honors talent and virtue, when met with in the lowest ranks, as much—nay, I verily believe, *more* than when found in the highest circles, where it is natural they should be more frequently seen."

——"But here we are, and you shall judge for yourself," concluded Captain Clifton, as he opened a gate admitting

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them into a shady yard, in the midst of which stood the house. They alighted at the gate and gave their horses into the charge of a negro boy, and walked on to the house. It was a plain oblong stone building, of two stories, with a deep, shady piazza, running the whole length of the front. It was divided through the centre by a wide passage way, the front and back doors of which were both open and drawing a fine draft of air, and from which opened four large airy rooms, two on a side. They stepped up on the piazza, and were met at the front door by a neatly clothed negro girl, who admitted them into the passage, and opening a door on the right hand next the front, showed them into a cool, breezy, but plainly furnished parlor; the walls and ceiling being simply white-washed, and the floor bare but highly polished with wax, as was the summer custom of the country at that day. The fire-place was open and filled with green bushes. The window-curtains, and the lounge, and easy chair covers, were all of chintz. There was a reality of substantial and permanent comfort about the place, that Frank thought he had never seen elsewhere. And when Clifton invited him to be seated, and he rested himself in one of those cool arm-chairs in that shaded room, he declared that a feeling of at-home-ativeness came over him, such as he had never experienced since he left his own mother's house, and never hoped to feel again until he should have a house of his own. The negro girl whom Clifton addressed as Hennie, then left the room to summon her mistress, and shortly after the lady of the house entered.

Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain, was now about fifty years of age—tall, and inclining to *embonpoint*, but not more so than well became her years. Her complexion was dark, and her hair and eyes black. Her features were strongly marked and commanding, indicative of great strength of will and indomitable firmness of purpose, all moderated, however, by the expression of her countenance, which was at once composed and gracious. Her manner was marked by unaffected dignity and courtesy—her dress was of very plain dark silk, made high to the throat, and with sleeves coming down to the wrists, a small ruff sat closely around her neck, fastened with a mourning pin. Her only head-dress was her own black hair, which, though slightly mingled with gray, was worn uncovered. Indeed, cap or turban upon that noble head would have looked impertinent. She advanced into the room and greeted her son with affection, and welcomed Mr. Fairfax with courtesy, though her words were so few, and her manner was so calm, as to seem cool. Frank thought her a very noble looking woman, though somewhat stiff and cold. Indeed, all strangers, and superficial observers, thought her cold and proud. Never was a greater misapprehension of character—never did a larger or more generous heart live in the bosom of woman—albeit, its pulsations were of the calmest and most regular character. She sat down and entered

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into an easy conversation with her son and his friend, inquired into the particulars of their journey, and making comments as they were related. Once during the recital her cheeks almost imperceptibly changed. It was at the telling of the hair-breadth escape at the brink of the Devil's Staircase, but upon that she made no observation whatever. She rang a little hand-bell, which was answered by the entrance of Hennie. She took a bunch of keys from her pocket, and giving them to the girl, directed her to bring refreshments. Hennie left the room, but soon returned bearing a large waiter with home-made wine, cake, and a basket of fine peaches and pears. While they regaled themselves upon these luxuries, she inquired after the health and well-being of the family of White Cliffs, and having received satisfactory answers, turned to Mr. Fairfax and hoped that he was sufficiently well pleased with their neighborhood to favor it with a long sojourn. Frank assured her that he should never grow weary of the delights of his visit, and should conclude it only when compelled to do so, and *then* with great regret. The conversation then became of more general interest. The weather, the condition of the roads, the health of the neighborhood, &c., were discussed. And then the discourse took a higher tone, and the agricultural and political condition and prospects of the whole country, and the great probability of another speedy war with Great Britian, were debated. And Mr. Fairfax wondered at the extent of information, the strong grasp of mind, and the depth and justness of thought, displayed by this recluse lady upon subjects apparently so foreign to her daily experience.

They made quite a long morning visit, and before their departure, Captain Clifton took an opportunity—while Mr. Fairfax was walking around the room and staring at some old family pictures, among which hung a portrait of Oliver Cromwell, as Lord Protector of England—to draw his mother aside, and say to her—

"Madam, I have a proposition to make to you, or a favor to ask--as it may turn out."

"What is it, my son?" gravely inquired the lady.

"You heard Mr. Fairfax speak of the young mountain-girl whom we had met just before the storm, and who kindly conducted us to her grandfather's cabin?"

"Yes."

"It is of her that I would speak, and for her that I would enlist your sympathy and protection—"

"Go on, I attend, my son."

"You have given me some credit for insight into character. If my judgment is worthy of your consideration, this young girl is deserving of your kindest offices."

"Does she deserve them?"

"Madam, she impressed me as being a child of high moral and mental endowments, and the trying experience of one night proved the truth of that impression."

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"Does she need my good offices?"

"Mother! with the finest intellectual capacities, she is nearly destitute of all opportunities of intellectual culture. That is bad—but not so deplorable as what follows. Kate Kavanagh—that is her name—is far removed from all of her own sex. Her young brother, her only protector, is absent from home from earliest dawn till late at night. Her only companion is an old man, an habitual drunkard, subject to frequent and furious fits of *mania-a-potu*. Her case, upon my showing, may not be so exigent. But if you had seen her as I did, it would seem so. Her brother being best acquainted with the circumstances, is the best judge in the premises, and is very anxious upon his sister's account, and wishes to get her a place at service."

"But if she is a girl of so excellent a nature as you have supposed, will she leave her aged relative?"

"Not willingly, certainly—but—I wish the opportunity of improving her condition afforded her, indeed, I promised her brother Carl that it should be presented."

"I know Carl Kavanagh—he worked for me during the last year. I formed a good opinion of him. If his sister is equal to him she must be a meritorious girl."

"She is very superior to him, madam."

The lady was mistress of great promptitude and decision of action. With her eyes fixed upon the ground she reflected for a few moments, then lifting them, said—

"Write to your friend Carl Kavanagh—"

"Not my *friend*, dear madam, an' it please you!" haughtily interrupted her son.

A slight shade of disapproval or of displeasure clouded the lady's brow for a moment, and she said—

"Write then to your dependent, Carl Kavanagh, and let him know that I am willing to receive his sister into my own service on trial—and that he may bring her hither as soon as is convenient."

"Thank you, dearest madam, I will write to-day and send a messenger with the letter. I am really pleased and grateful for this kindness," said Archer Clifton, pressing his lips to the cheek she offered to his salute.

The young men soon after took leave, being engaged to dine that day at home at White Cliffs.

"Clifton!" said Mr. Fairfax, as they rode along, "excuse me for telling you freely how highly I honor your mother. Yes! you may stare! *I*—the irreverent—the rash said—*excuse* me for telling you how highly I honor your mother—for, by my faith, she is a lady whom to praise is presumption! But, my dear Clifton, how is it that she resembles so closely that old portrait of Oliver Cromwell, which hangs, besides, between two family portraits. It is not possible you claim descent from *him*?"

"My mother does, by the female line. I do not think I

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have much of his nature. In his time I should have been a royalist. My mother venerates his character very highly."

"By my soul! she is like him enough in feature."

"Yes, and in many points of character, she is strikingly like him."

In conversation such as this the friends reached White Cliffs, and Mr. Fairfax retired to his chamber to dress for dinner, and Captain Clifton entered the library for the purpose of writing a letter to Carl Kavanagh.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TIDE OF FATE.

There is a tide in the affairs of man,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.—SHAKESPEARE.

"There is a tide in the affairs of 'woman,'
Which, taken at the flood, leads—" God knows where.—BYRON.

CAPTAIN CLIFTON had written to Carl Kavanagh, informing him of the situation he had procured for the sister of the latter, at Hardbargain. And within this letter he had inclosed a longer one, to Kate, filled with good counsels and urgent reasons why she should yield to the wishes of her brother, and accept the place offered to her. After having dispatched these letters by a boy, who left White Cliffs that afternoon, on horseback, he delivered himself up to the delights of Miss Clifton's society, forgetting all about the mountain-girl, until the next day, when, being seated in the library, his messenger returned, entered his presence, and handed him a packet. It was a letter from Carl Kavanagh, inclosing one from Kate. He read Carl's epistle first. It began by expressing much gratitude to his benefactor, for his kindness in having procured a situation for his sister, and went on by expressing much sorrow that he could not prevail upon Kate, either by entreaties or threats, to accept it, and unbounded indignation at what he called the girl's wicked stubbornness. The letter closed by reiterating the thanks of the writer. Captain Clifton held the letter open in his hand, and lifting his head, fell into deep thought. It was strange how much this little matter depressed him. Account for it, any philosopher that can. Some proud people have a proclivity to patronage—Captain Clifton was very proud, and perhaps he was piqued at being prevented playing the patron. Perhaps it was really disappointed benevolence. Only it is certain that Archer Clifton did not possess that quality to an immoderate degree—and having once done his duty of charity, would be likely to content himself with any result. Perchance he felt a deeper interest in the rugged little mountaineer than he would have acknowledged, even to himself. Perhaps it was prescience—the shadow of coming events. Be that as it may, Archer Clifton walked up and down the floor in silent thought, occasionally broken by a slight sigh. It was won-

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derful how much the knowledge that he should not have this child at home in his mother's house vexed his soul.

At length he recollected Kate's own letter, yet unopened. But of what avail to read it! It would certainly be the counterpart of Carl's. He opened it. It was not, however. In the first place, the paper was perfectly clean; and in the second, the writing, spelling, and style, were rather better. She acknowledged the goodness of Captain Clifton, in taking thought of her humble wants—expressed regret that she could not avail herself of his kindness—could not leave her grandfather, who needed her services, and subscribed herself Captain Clifton's obliged and grateful servant. It *was* very much like Carl's after all. But here is a postscript. What more can she have to say, after what she has said, thought Clifton, as he turned to it. It read thus—

"P. S.—I hope Captain Clifton will pardon me, if he thinks that I am doing wrong—but it has come into my head, that as Captain Clifton is about to marry, and reside in future at White Cliffs—and as Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain, will then be quite alone—and as she is not so young, or active, or able to ride about her plantation, overseeing her field hands as formerly—perhaps she will be thinking of getting a farm-manager—if so, will Captain Clifton kindly remember my brother Carl, and speak a favorable word for him to the lady of Hardbargain, who already knows and trusts him? If Carl gets a situation as overseer, I can keep house for him, and we can both take care of our grandfather. Indeed I am afraid Captain Clifton will be justly angry with me for this liberty."

"What a letter!" exclaimed Archer Clifton, as his face alternately lighted up with satisfaction, or became clouded with thought. What a letter for a rustic girl of fourteen! Yet characteristic of *her* and of her situation. Showing the germs of reflection, forethought, courage and promptitude, the gifts of nature, mingled with that frankness bordering upon presumption, which belongs to total ignorance of the world. To dare to speak familiarly of our domestic affairs! But yet how naïvely she deprecates my displeasure, at what she feels may be received as presumption."

So deeply did Captain Clifton study Kate and her letter; Kate's remarkable countenance, with its breadth of brow and gentleness of eyes, haunted him.

He was a man of prompt decision and action—so, having once admitted the idea that his mother needed an overseer, he exclaimed—

"Yes—my mother must be relieved from her arduous occupation—unbefitting a lady of her rank, and especially of her age. Why could I not think of that before? Why should I never have seen the necessity, until Catherine held it up before me? Yes—my mother must have a manager on her farm, and Carl Kavanagh shall be the man. I will pay his

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salary myself." And he rung the bell, ordered his horse, and in less than fifteen minutes was on his way to Hardbargain.

As he rode up to the house, he met a girl with a pail on her head, going to the spring, and inquired of her where her mistress was to be found. He was told, "down in the wheat field." So turning his horse's head a little to the left of the house, he rode down the slope of the hill, to a wide harvest field, where he found Mrs. Clifton, seated on her mule, superintending the operations of some fifteen or twenty laborers, who were employed in stacking wheat. He rode up to his mother's side, alighted, and held out his hand, saying—

"How-do-you-do, to-day, madam? Busily engaged as ever, I see, mother."

"How-do-you-do, Archer? Yes, very busy."

While Captain Clifton was revolving in his mind the best way of introducing the object of his visit, which he had reason to believe would be distasteful to the energetic, independent lady—she quite unconsciously anticipated his intention, and relieved him from his embarrassment, by saying—

"The heat is extremely oppressive, and I begin to find this business too much for me, Archer. This continuing out in the fields day after day, and all day long, throughout this burning weather, begins to tell, even upon my constitution."

Archer Clifton looked at his mother and noticed for the first time a slight but certain change in her countenance, invisible, perhaps, to an indifferent glance, but seeming to the eye of affection, fearfully like the very earliest premonitory symptoms of decay. That look pierced him to the heart. The fainter sound of her voice, too, had vaguely suggested failing strength—it fell upon his ear like a prophecy, a warning, a knell. He realized then, for the first time, that his mother was mortal—was growing old—that some day he should lose her. He felt then, for the first time, how much *he*—a man—had rested on his good mother—and his heart was troubled within him. And yet it was all caused only by a transient weariness in the look of her face, and a faintness in the tone of her voice. But more than all things else on earth—more *deeply*—though less ardently—than his own fair expectant bride—did Archer Clifton love his mother! It had even been said, some years before, by one who knew him best, that Clifton could never love any woman with the full force of his nature unless in qualities of mind and heart she resembled his mother. But of course, Captain Clifton had disproved that prophecy by adoring his cousin, the haughty and beautiful Miss Clifton. This is a digression—to return—

As the new pang of fear for his mother's health sped through his heart, Archer Clifton took her hand—he had a singularly sweet and persuasive voice and manner, when moved by his affections, and said—

"There is no necessity for it, dear mother. Surely, the motive that prompted you when I was a lad, and when this farm was our only prospect, has long ceased to operate."

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"I know it, Archer. For some years past this personal superintendence of the fields has been more a matter of habit than a matter of necessity. If I could find a good manager I might try one."

"What do you think of Carl Kavanagh in that capacity, mother?"

"Carl! I never thought of him at all. He has never managed a plantation."

"But yet he has been a farm laborer many years—has a practical knowledge of agriculture, and is, besides, a man of more intelligence than is usually to be found in his class."

"Yes—he is," said the lady, thoughtfully.

"He is also a man of excellent moral character, and faultless habits—qualities not too frequently met with among those of his grade."

"True—most true—but yet he is young, and has had no experience in overseeing."

"And never will have, dear madam, unless some one gives him the opportunity of making the trial. And as for his youth, mother—why his youth is positively an advantage—for with his practical knowledge, intelligence and honesty, he will be free from the conceit and crotchets of an old manager, and will the more readily fall into your system."

"There is something in that," said the lady. "And now, Archer, you will remain and dine with me to-day. And remember, that when this week is out, the next week belongs to me. You must bring your friend with you when you come. Where did you leave him?"

"Playing at battledore with Zuleime. But, dear mother, about this Carl Kavanagh—I hope you will consider the plan favorably, and try him."

"I will think of it, Archer, because you propose it, if for no other reason. And now the horn is blowing for the hands to go to dinner, and my task for the day is relieved. Let us return to the house."

They turned their animals' heads, and rode up the ascent and entered the shady yard. Then the lady alighted from her mule, gathered up her riding skirt, and leaning on the arm of her son, entered the house. A plain but substantial dinner was soon served. Archer Clifton enjoyed his mother's plain meals more than the most luxurious dinners—not but that he had a taste for luxury—what man has not?—but that there was a home comfort about his mother's table, that gave him appetite and spirit. And then, after dinner, he could go and stretch himself upon the best lounge in that large, shady, breezy parlor, with a book, and read or doze until she had attended to the putting away of her things, and had locked up her pantries. Then she would come and sit in the rocking-chair by his side, while he could stretch himself at ease, in any ungainly attitude he pleased, and feel what a refreshing thing it was to throw off his dignity in the presence of

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the only one with whom he could do so—his own familiar mother. Not but that he honored—nay, *revered* her—but that he enjoyed only in her house, that deep, full sense of home freedom, which not only her son—but to a certain degree all others felt, who possessed the privilege of the lady's friendship.

This afternoon, then, he was lying at his ease on the cool lounge between the two front windows, which were drawing strong drafts of air, and flapping the festooned curtains lazily. He had thrown himself out at full length upon the lounge, in the most delightfully *degagè* attitude, albeit it was somewhat angular and awkward—his head being thrown back over the end of the lounge, his hands clasped above his forehead, and his elbows very prominent, one foot, minus a slipper, hoisted upon the window-sill, and the other slippered foot dangling on the carpet. But the picturesque beauty of his dark, handsome face, atoned for all the rest. His mother sat in an easy-chair near him, with her feet upon a footstool, and a workstand by her side. She was engaged in stitching wristbands—for that vigorous woman never required a lounge in the day-time—but though she never took one, yet she never blamed the indulgence of that habit in others for which she herself felt no inclination. She was the most liberal and benevolent of all human beings, in every act of her daily life. She was happy in seeing others comfortable around her. She was ever pleased to see them enjoying those relaxations which her own strong nature did not need. Indeed, courage without asperity, fortitude without indurancy, strength without hardness, self-denial without sternness, power without arrogance, formed the peculiar excellence of her character. No wonder that her son revered her. No wonder it had been said of him, that he never could love a woman with all the power of his nature, unless in mental and moral endowments she resembled his mother. As they talked together this afternoon, the hours slipped away till late in the evening, before the image of the beautiful Carolyn had power to draw him from the *tête à tête*. During the afternoon he had prevailed with his mother to receive Carl Kavanagh as her overseer —and to have the comfortable log-cabin which had been occupied by the first proprietor of the soil, prepared for the reception of the family.

When Archer Clifton at length arose to take his leave, he pressed his mother to his heart with so much fondness and power, that the quiet, calm lady laughed, a little, low, jolly laugh, and jested about Carolyn's jealousy even of his mother.

Captain Clifton returned to White Cliffs, and gave himself up for the rest of the evening, to the charms of Carolyn's conversation.

The next day was one of festivity. Mrs. Clifton, of Hard-

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bargain, came over to dine at White Cliffs, and to meet a large party of the neighboring gentry. The day after that, the whole party dined and spent the evening at Hardbargain—and this was the commencement of a series of neighborhood entertainments in honor of the approaching marriage, which were kept up for several weeks. The wedding was to come off in the course of a month—the present delay being owing to this circumstance: old Mr. Clifton had sent to England, by the good ship Rockbridge, Captain Cater, an extensive order, including a splendid outfit for the bride; and they were now awaiting to hear of the the arrival of the Rockbridge at Norfolk. In all the excitement of social enjoyment, Captain Clifton had found time to ride to the mountain hut, and arrange with Carl Kavanagh to come and take the situation of overseer at Hardbargain. He agreed to pay the latter a liberal salary, and to provide a comfortable house for his family. One thing surprised and annoyed him. Kate, who had written so freely, frankly, almost presumptuously to him—received him with the old cold shyness and reserve—not even expressing the least gratitude for the kindness he had shown in getting the situation for her brother, or the trouble he had condescended to take in coming personally to inform them of it. He agreed with Carl, that the latter, with his grandfather and sister, should remove to Hardbargain in the course of the week—and on his own part he promised to have the log-house prepared for their reception. He shook hands with the old man and Carl on parting, but when he offered the same civility to Kate, she turned pale and trembled, and when he took her hand he found it cold.

"I do not think you are well, my dear girl—your mountain air does not engender chills, does it?" he asked, pressing the cold fingers.

She raised her eyes one brief instant to his, and dropped them quickly again, while her pale cheek and brow became suffused with crimson, and her hand that he held in his own throbbed like a heart.

"When we get you to the plantation you will be better, my dear girl," said Clifton, kindly, shaking her hand and letting it go.

Captain Clifton rode away full of thought—speculating more upon Catherine's reserve than became a gentleman of his station and importance. What was it to him that a rustic girl was too shy to express in person, her thanks for a favor received, even though she had "screwed her courage to the sticking place" to write to him and solicit it? Many people, more conversant with the world than Catherine, can write that which they never can bring their lips to say. Besides it was no matter—what was that lowly maiden to him, the heir of Clifton, and the prospective husband of the highest and haughtiest lady in the land? Yes—what to him except an object of his high patronage could be that girl of—not

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only "humble parentage," but indubitably *low birth?* He rode on dissatisfied, he knew not wherefore, with her and himself.

As for Catherine, she stood—lost—where he had left her—lost to the consciousness of her grandfather's and of Carl's presence—with her eyes fixed upon the ground, blaming herself for her awkwardness and seeming ingratitude; wondering if *he* blamed her too; wondering why it was that when she saw him enter she grew cold and trembled so; and when he spoke to her in that gentle tone, and looked at her with that gentle gaze—her whole nature shrank away in fear and trepidation—and though she would have given the world for the ability to express her gratitude and regard, all power of uttering a grateful word or of lifting a grateful glance to his face, deserted, and left her pale and trembling before the man whom she had no cause to fear, and every reason to trust. Catherine stood with her mind deep in this problem, until the harsh voice of Carl startled her, saying, in rasping tones—

"Well! are you going to stand there burrowing your eyes in the ground all day? A pretty way you have behaved! Please goodness, you've got no more manners than a dumb brute. I take my oath I am ashamed of you! Now there was Captain Clifton, a gentleman of so high rank, condescending to come here and tell us himself of the place he had got for us, even after your unmannerly refusal of that first place—and here were you with not one *word* of thanks to give—no! please Heaven, not so much as one civil *look!* I wonder what he'll think of you?"

"What, indeed?" repeated Catherine, very meekly.

But Carl scarcely recognized her voice. It was no longer the childish treble—it was the deep, full, melodious voice of rich womanhood.

"Why, the *kindest* thought he can have of you, will be to think you are a *fool*—that is all."

"Carl, I was in fear of him."

"In fear of him! In fear of Archer Clifton! A man whom all the country knows to be of the highest honor—and one to whom even *I*, cautious as *I* am, could trust you with, to go from one end of the world to the other!"

"I know that, Carl—I know he is a gentleman of honor, but—but—I tremble before him, and have not courage to lift my eyes—"

"But that is so confoundedly ridiculous, now! *why* are you afraid of him?"

Kate shook her head and waved her hand in that quick, short manner which was peculiar to her, and turned away—repeating in her own heart the question—"Yes, why, *why*, WHY?"

Whether the maiden found an answer to the question or not, remained a secret to Carl; this was the first and last conversation they ever held on the subject; and whatever phenomena the opening heart of the maiden revealed to herself, were carefully shrouded away from the eyes of all.

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How beautiful was Carolyn Clifton! So fair, so purely, so divinely fair, so radiant, so refined, so stately! How fit a consort for the proud Archer Clifton! How his heart swelled with admiration and pride as he gazed upon her queenly form—and how it glowed to think that in a very few days that fair stately lady, who never deigned to own a passion, whose love he only guessed by her proud exaction of exclusive service, who scarcely condescended to extend her snowy hand to his salute—would be his own, his own, his wife, his property, his other self—whose form he might press to his bosom in the fullest freedom of possession! And as he sat by her side and held her hand, and gazed upon her inaccessible, delightful beauty; oh! how slowly, slowly, to his impatient, burning, throbbing heart—how slowly, dragged the days and hours.

Well—oh very well would it have been for Archer Clifton, could he have rent his gaze from his magnetic idol a moment, and caught a certain pair of evil eyes upon him. Their baleful glare might have shed upon his path some light to see the pit falls in his way.

CHAPTER V.

There is a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them as we will.—SHAKSPEARE.

CARL KAVANAGH and his sister were settled in the log-cabin on the farm of Hardbargain. Carl, as an old acquaintance of the mistress, and a late laborer on the plantation, fell readily into his new business of overseeing it. Catherine began to busy herself in the management of her new and very comfortable home. Their cabin contained a sitting-room, kitchen, and two chambers. Mrs. Clifton had gratified her own kindly and benevolent disposition by adding several plain articles of furniture to the small stock possessed by the poor family. She had, besides, given Catherine a set of half-worn, white dimity curtains, and a pair of coarse, home-made white counterpanes. These gave an air of neatness, approaching—I had almost said refinement to the sitting-room, and two little bed-rooms. Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain, was not addicted to taking sudden likings—indeed, though a lady of perfect frankness, benevolence and liberality of judgment, she was cool and prudent—yet, notwithstanding this, her kindest affections were at once attracted towards Kate. It is true she had been prepared to think well of the child from an intimate knowledge of her brother Carl's honesty and intelligence, but at the first sight of Catherine, the noble countenance of the mountain-girl riveted her esteem. There are some faces which we know at a glance cannot belong to other than a fine, high-toned character. And such a countenance was that of Catherine. And it won upon the lady every day, as no merely beautiful face could ever have done. For hers was a brow—

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" Where every god did seem to set his seal to give the world assurance of—"

a peerless woman. Often Mrs. Clifton invited Catherine to bring her work and sit with her through the afternoon, and seldom did she let the girl return without placing in her hand some book just suitable to her very age, and the stage of progress of her mind. And oh! did not the heart of the maiden kindle and glow with love and admiration for the noble lady, who, without one particle of pride, or the least pretension to condescension—condescended so much. And so Catherine grew to understand and appreciate Mrs. Clifton, and to look upon her with a feeling amounting almost to worship. How happy were those afternoons spent with her in the cool and breezy parlor. How deeply grateful was Kate for all her benefits—how anxious to prove her gratitude—to do something for her benefactress. But Kate was very shy, and her love only spoke in the stealthy look of affection fixed upon the lady, and withdrawn with a deeply blushing cheek if discovered. But by these tokens sure did Mrs. Clifton know the sweetness and the tenderness, the modesty and the sincerity of the maiden's hidden heart. And all this time was Catherine wishing for the ability to tell her friend how much she thanked and loved her. One afternoon she mustered up the courage to tell the lady that she should like to read to her any time that it would be agreeable; also, that she had some skill in doing up laces and such things, and that she should be happy if she could assist Mrs. Clifton in such matters. Mrs. Clifton placed her hand affectionately on Catherine's head, and declined all her offers of service except that which related to the reading—which she accepted—hoping thereby to improve her protégée in many ways—to direct her choice of books, to correct her elocution, and to awaken her understanding of what she read by questions and comments. So they began a course of historical reading with Rollin's Ancient History. And that which this excellent lady commenced as a duty of kindness soon became a matter of daily recreation. It was indeed a rare intellectual pleasure to arouse, cultivate and hold communion with a fresh, vigorous, original enthusiastic mind like that of Catherine. And those afternoons were almost as happy for the lady as for her protégée—happier for Catherine they could not have been. Once, the shy girl was entirely carried out of herself and her reverie by the following circumstance: The lady had inadvertently let fall that she was a descendant of Oliver Cromwell, when Kate, hurried beyond her consciousness, clasped her hand and gazed fervently up in her face exclaiming—

" Descended from Oliver Cromwell! Descended from Oliver Cromwell, that friend of man? that friend of freedom? Oh! it is no wonder, lady, that you are so noble! so superior to all the world!"

" My Catherine," said the lady, calmly withdrawing her hand. " You know too little—far too little of the world, to

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judge how I stand in comparison to others. And what know you of Oliver Cromwell? Our reading has scarcely reached the invasion of Britain by the Romans."

"Oh, lady! lady! lady!" said Kate, warmly, being not yet recovered from her trance—"lady—Carl and I had not many books, so we read what we had over and over again! And one of the books we read the most was the life of Oliver Cromwell!"

"You are generally so shy, Catherine, that it is a blind work in me to direct your studies, not knowing what you have read and what you have not."

Yes—very delightful to both were these seasons, and very strong was the affection beginning to cement between the lady and the maiden. There was only one thing that disturbed Catherine in the perfect enjoyment of these afternoons. When Archer Clifton would surprise them by suddenly entering the room, and throwing himself into an armchair or upon a sofa, her heart would stand still, and her whole frame tremble with an agitation as impossible to comprehend as to conquer. And yet much as his arrival disturbed her his departure failed to make her happy. On the contrary, it left a strange sadness and yearning she could not shake off. But then these things were of rare occurrence. Captain Clifton very seldom found time to visit his mother—he was contented to know that she had a companion;—and as for Kate, he never thought of her at all—she was provided for and forgotten. Body, soul, and spirit were taken up—absorbed in the comtemplation of his promised bride and in the anticipation of her possession. Catherine knew he was soon to be married, but what of that? She was a child, with no knowledge at her tender years to understand her own heart, and no skill to define its first developments.

At White Cliffs "all went merry as a marriage bell." The "Rockbridge" was at length telegraphed at Norfolk. A letter with an invoice was received by Mr. Clifton, who immediately dispatched a special messenger to receive his valuable portion of the cargo. The wedding-day was fixed for that day week, and great preparations were on foot. The gentry of the neighboring counties were invited. The mansion-house was "swept and garnished" from garret to cellar. Frank and Zuleime were daily rehearsing their parts as bridesmaid and groomsman, which Frank declared to be only an apprenticeship to the business of enacting bride and groom. Some city guests from Richmond had arrived by particular invitation, four or five days before the expected wedding. Last of all came the waggon with the boxes from Norfolk. They were opened in the hall—such treasure of splendid attire, and such sets of jewellery! And, above all, such a trousseau for the bride—conspicuous in which was the bridal dress and veil—the bridal dress and train of richest white brocade heavily embroidered with silver, after the gorgeous fashion of that

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time—the bridal veil of finest lace—the orange flower wreath of pearls and emeralds—the pearl embroidered gloves and slippers—the pearl and silver mounted fan, and all complete in correspondence. And richer still was a ball-dress of blue silver-embroidered brocade, with its elegant coiffure or ostrich feathers, the sight of which Zuleime declared was enough to precipitate *any* girl into matrimony.

Every one was too happy, too busy and too self-important to notice the deathly hue of Georgia's cheek, far less to detect the fitful glare of the well-guarded eye. Every one but her husband, who, leaving his daughters and their maids to unpack the boxes, followed her into her own chamber, saying as he fondly laid his hand upon her shoulder—

"My darling doesn't seem to be merry."

She shrank—shuddered from his touch, exclaiming almost shrilly—

"Leave me!"

"Leave you, my dear!—my child!—why leave you?" he asked, passing his hand gently around her shoulders.

"Leave me! leave me!" she cried, sharply, casting off the arm and springing back—her cheek blanched, her teeth snapping, her eyes sparkling fire, more like a terrified wolf than a woman, "have I not told you never, *never* to come near me in my dark hour?"

"But why should my cherished pet have dark hours?" he persisted, approaching her.

"Keep off! keep off! old man, you know not what you do!"

"Yes, I'm old—I know I'm old—I wish I wasn't, for I love you, my darling. Yes, I love you more tenderly and less selfishly than if I was younger. I love you entirely—altogether—your little dark face—your little fiery ways—your little outbursts of temper that no one sees but me, who look upon it with indulgent eyes. Would a young man love you so tenderly, Georgia?"

"Driveller! you make me loathe you! 'My little fiery ways.' 'My little outbursts of temper,' forsooth! How little do you understand me! You sting my soul to frenzy with your dotage, and then twaddle about liking my *little outbursts of temper*, forsooth."

"Dotage! Yes! I really do suppose you consider it dotage!"

"Yes! drivelling! idiotic! imbecile dotage!"

"Yes! I do suppose you think it is! I am too old for you, Georgia—I know it, alas! too well, now that it is too late—and yet you did not raise the least objection to becoming my wife, Georgia."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! *Objection!* I was but fifteen years of age when you bribed me to your arms with a set of jewels, and a gold mounted work-box! I was a child, delighted with glittering toys! and fond, yes! *very* fond of the grandfatherly old man that poured them into my lap! Did *that* child-fondness deceive you?"

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"It did, it did! You were very fond of me when you were a child! Would to God I could have spell-bound you to that age, so you never could have grown older! Oh! I could find it in heart to shame my manhood, to shame my gray hairs and weep! I should not have married you, Georgia, child! I should not have sacrificed you to my selfish love—yet, no! It was *not* selfish love! I wished your greatest good. I wished to surround you for life with all the means and appliances of happiness. I wished to lavish wealth upon you—ay; wealth of gold, and wealth of affection, too: I wished to give you a sumptuous home, splendid apparel, costly jewels, carriages, servants—all those things which women value so much, and scheme, and plot, and endeavor for so perseveringly! I wished to give them all to my darling, before she should have time to feel the need of them!"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" bitterly laughed the girl. "Oh! do you know what women value more than gold and jewels, and dress, and carriages, and horses, and servants?—I'll tell you—the ungalled, unfettered heart's freedom!"

"I know it! Oh! I know it! My love has destroyed your happiness. Oh, Georgia! did you never see a beautiful bird, and long to have it for your own, only to caress and pamper and pet it? Oh, Georgia! my child, my pet, my bird! that was the reason I wanted you! I wanted to cherish, and fondle, and make you happy!"

"*Ah-h!* And did *you* never see such a bird as you spoke of, in spite of all the petting, and pampering, and fondlings, beat out its weary life against its prison bars and die?"

"Don't die, Georgia! Don't die! Hope! Alas! I wished only to make you happy—I have failed! I have made you miserable!"

"'*Miserable*,' ruined! despairing! desperate!" she cried, wildly wringing her hands.

"Nay, not despairing, Georgia! I am an old man, as you justly said—*quite* an old man. I have not very long to live, and when I die, Georgia, you will still be a very young woman. Bethink you, you are scarce seventeen—in ten years more you will be but twenty-seven, and is it even likely that I shall live so long as that? No! And after my heart is cold, and my head is laid low, Georgia will be a beautiful young widow—ay, and with a rich jointure, too! I shall take care of that!"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! *pathetic!* I tell you, that if you were to die to-morrow, my life is not the less ruined—despairing!" bitterly exclaimed the young woman.

"Nay, but that cannot be, Georgia. Ruined? Despairing? What! at seventeen years of age? Nonsense, my love! *Nothing* but crime can make the youthful despair! Nonsense, my child! You are hysterical!" he said, moving towards her with outstretched arms.

"Dotard! driveller!" she cried, turning fiercely upon him,

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with eyes blazing with scorn and malignity. "*Imbecile!* Will you leave me to myself?"

The old gentleman turned away walked several times slowly up and down the floor, and finally saying—

"Yes, I know I am a dotard! I know it, and I grow ashamed of dotage—" clapped his hat upon his head and walked out.

Bitterly did the old man rue his folly, yet, alas! he knew but half the cause of that ingrate and wretched woman's fierce outbreaks of temper.

She followed his retreating form, with a glaring of mingled rage and fear, gnawing her white lips, while she muttered, in a low, fierce tone—

"I could tear my heart out! I could bite my tongue off, for thus betraying me! Shall I ever have power to chain and guide the tiger in me? But *he* with his doting, and *they* with their dalliance, goad me to extremity? *But*," she exclaimed, clenching her fist, setting her teeth, and glaring, while all her countenance darkened with rage and anguish—"*But*, before they shall MARRY under my very eyes, and live here, maddening my soul and senses, day and night, by the view of their love and joy, I will pull down ruin on the heads of all! Yes, although myself should be the first to fall!" She paused in silent thought some time, then rising, said, "*Down*, tiger heart! *Down!* crouch! Be smooth, brow! Be smiling, lip! Be tender, eyes! Be soft, voice! And now to go and pacify the old man, before his vexation betrays me to the others. Ah! it is well *they* have never witnessed my excitement! Come! in time I shall learn to curb wild impulses, and only spring upon my prey when time and place is fit!"

Soft, smooth, fascinating, seductive, she glided from her chamber out into the upper piazza, where the old man's slow and heavy footfall was heard—she glided after him, and with an air of sweet, familiar, childish freedom, she raised his arm, and putting her beautiful head under it, drew his hand around her neck and over her bosom, and looking up pleadingly, simply, into his benevolent face, murmured, merely—

"I am so sorry, Mr. Clifton!"

"Never mind! never mind, my dear!" said the old gentleman, stooping and kissing her brow.

"Oh, but I *am! so sorry!*"

"You, child! Do you think I mind your little petulance?"

"Oh! you are good, you are good. Indeed I'm quite unworthy of you!" she whispered softly, pressing her head against his bosom, and clinging close.

"You, darling!" cried the old man, stroking her curls in delight.

"I am such an irritable, petulant child! I am sure no one would have patience with me but you—that is the reason I love you so!"

"You do love me then?" gazing fondly into her witching face.

"Oh, dearly! dearly! look in my eyes and see if I don't!"

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"Yes! I know you do, my pet! And I love you entirely!"

"Ah! how can you then! I have so many faults!"

"I love your little faults, and all! Come! Brighten up! Never mind! I love to see my darling bright and cheerful."

"Ah! how can I, when I remember my fit of ill temper!"

"Say no more about it, my love! That's the reason why I love you! For those very little gusts of temper! They are followed by such a sweet re-action! and then my child is so frank, so ingenuous in her little penitence!"

"Ah! But then I am such a spoiled child! And always was! Father spoiled me. And now you spoil me worse than ever!"

"My sweet! you can't be spoiled! you are so ingenuous! But now tell me, what vexed my little girl this evening? Come, let me hear?" asked the old man, caressing the syren.

"Well! now it was this! I thought you loved Carolyn and Zuleime better than me!" replied the the artful woman, gazing half-reproachfully, half-pleadingly up into his smiling face.

"Love Carolyn and Zuleime better than you! Why you jealous little witch!" exclaimed the old man in rapture. "Love *them* more than you! Why, I have to pray Heaven's pardon daily, for not loving them a hundredth part as much! —kiss me!"

Georgia nerved her loathing heart to give the demanded kiss, and then went and joined the party in the parlor, as beautiful, smooth, seductive, dangerous as ever; while the old man walked up and down the piazza, smiling to himself and saying—

"She is a child—nothing but a child!—a sweet, wilful, witching child!"

Alas! little recking of the household treachery, the household wreck that "child" was preparing!

CHAPTER VI.

THE RUPTURED TIE.

Alas! they had been friends in youth,
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above,
And life is thorny, and youth is vain,
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness on the brain.

WHAT ruin a single spark of fire may spread, if carelessly or designedly dropped amid combustible or inflammable material.

What desolation a single word may cause, if thoughtlessly or intentionally let fall into a passionate, impetuous heart.

The three scenes I am about to describe, took place very nearly as they are related.

But first few words of explanation.

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I feel that I have scarcely done justice to the character of Carolyn Clifton, in presenting her only by that cold and frosty crust of pride, which was but the superficial covering of a high-spirited, honorable nature. Her manners were cold and haughty—almost scornful and arrogant—it is but too true. And most people, her family included, supposed her to be destitute of sensibility. Perhaps she was lacking in warmth of affection for her immediate domestic circle. Her whole heart, with all its deep, profound, untold, unguessed devotion, was given to Archer Clifton. And while secretly bestowing upon him her entire, undivided love—she openly exacted a full, unshared return—an exclusive worship.

In truth, in her proud, secret heart, she *was* a little jealous of Clifton's affection for his mother! *She* did not love her *father* so devotedly!—why should *Clifton* worship his *mother* so? To this jealousy she had never given breath, of course—indeed, to her own passionate love, she had never yet given word—preferring, in her high toned, maiden pride, to leave it to be inferred. She had never even *looked* her jealousy, yet Mrs. Clifton, with the fine instinct of a woman and a mother, guessed it, and in her presence, skilfully eluded all demonstrations of affection from her son. And so well was the proud, exacting spirit of Miss Clifton known in her own family, that even the sprightly and mischievous outlaw, Zuleime, dared take no childish liberty with her sister's betrothed. Thus it happened that Frank Fairfax's unlucky jest had deeply offended the arrogant lady, the more especially as in that day, and in that neighborhood, the term "mountain-girl," was too often the mildest name for an evil woman.—This fact, of course, Frank was not acquainted with. And, therefore it was, that he could not understand Carl Kavanagh's excessive anxiety to send his young sister off the mountain; and could not in the least comprehend the intense indignation of Miss Clifton, and the difficulty Archer Clifton had in restoring her good humor. Even now, Carolyn Clifton had not forgotten the circumstance. And truth to tell, she was not well pleased at the continued interest displayed by Captain Clifton for his protégée, in bringing her and her family upon his mother's plantation. But she was too proud again to allude to the subject. Carolyn Clifton had never known a care or a contradiction in her life. Her heart was a sound, strong, high, proud thing, and therefore, very like to break itself without fear, full tilt against the first impediment that opposed it. She was, besides, like all women of her fair complexion and fine tempered nerves—"a discerner of spirits." And this quick, delicate, and sure perception never failed her, except when she was agitated and blinded by inward passion. Thus, perhaps, quite unconsciously, she read the heart of her betrothed—and knew it better than he did himself—and thus perhaps, involuntarily, she afterwards acted on that knowledge.

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At all events, there was quite enough combustible material on hand for a single spark to ignite it and spread a conflagration.

And the spark—and many sparks were not wanting. A thoughtless jest of Frank's—a slight word dropped by Georgia at exactly the right, or rather the *wrong* time and place—and the whole neighborhood of R——— County were agog with gossip. And Captain Clifton and his protégée, was the subjects. Some, right in the face of his well-known engagement to Miss Clifton, did not hesitate to say that she, his protégée, was a beautiful girl, whom he intended to educate and marry, and that his republican mother was highly in favor of the plan. Others told how tastefully the overseer's house had been furnished and adorned, and—without the slightest foundation in truth—how many hours a day Captain Clifton now spent with his interesting pupil. The suspicious and malignant circulated a still darker tale, and wondered how long it would last, and how it would all end. And then they denounced Captain Clifton, blamed his mother, and pitied Miss Clifton! And all this time while the whole county was ringing with various and contradictory reports, the persons most concerned knew nothing about it.

Until the day before the wedding, it was suddenly brought to the knowledge of both parties, in the following manner:—

The company assembled at Clifton, consisting of old Mr. Clifton's brother-in-law and sister, Judge and Mrs. Cabell of Richmond, with their three daughters and son, Frank Fairfax, Zuleime, and Captain Clifton, had gone over to dine by previous engagement with Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain. Carolyn Clifton had been compelled, by a slight headache, to remain at home. And Georgia had chosen to stay to keep her company. The two ladies sat in the dressing-room of Miss Clifton. Carolyn was silent and abstracted, yet her countenance betrayed more of inward joy than she suspected. A great contrast was her fair, placid face, to that of Georgia, dark, and traversed by spasms of pain-like clouds hurling past a stormy sky. But if Carolyn lifted her fair lashes a moment, instantly that dark face cleared, ere its expression could be detected. At length she ventured, in a sweet tone to say—

"Carolyn, my dear, to-morrow is your wedding day. And—but—there is something which you ought to know beforehand, and which for weeks past I have been trying to gain courage to tell you."

"Well, madam?" asked Miss Clifton, slowly lifting her snowy lids.

"I should—that is, I *might* expose myself to the resentment of all your family by telling you."

"Then you had best not tell me, madam."

"And yet you ought to be informed, and must. *I* should never forgive a friend for keeping such a secret from me."

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A vague fear and tremor seized upon Carolyn Clifton, and kept her silent. The dark lady went on—

"I think the honor, the happiness, even the tranquillity of your married life, depends upon your previous knowledge of this circumstance."

"Madam—the honor, happiness and tranquillity of my married life pass into the keeping of my husband, Captain Clifton, and in him I have the utmost confidence," remarked Carolyn, coldly and proudly, though, alas!—not *truly*.

"Heaven forbid that I should unnecessarily mar that confidence! But, my love, you will be sure to hear it, when too late, and from less friendly lips than mine!"

"Will it please you, then, madam, to speak out frankly and honestly, and let us know what it is," said Carolyn, scornfully, at the same time that her heart was rising with emotion.

"Is it possible you do not guess?"

"I do not take the trouble to do so, Mrs. Clifton."

"Ah! you have always treated me with scorn and hauteur, Miss Clifton. Yet that, alas! does not relieve me of the painful duty of putting you on your guard. In a word, then, do you understand the nature of the relations subsisting between Captain Clifton and the sister of his mother's overseer?"

The brow of Carolyn Clifton flushed crimson—but she answered coldly—

"Madam, I believe that young person has been the object of Captain Clifton's benevolence."

"Ah! I believe so too! His benevolence is certainly indisputable, and his honor *should* be above suspicion!" exclaimed Georgia, fervently.

"Madam—*it is!*" coldly replied Miss Clifton.

"Yes—and yet, Carolyn, my love, a poor and beautiful young maiden cannot continue to be the recipient of a handsome young officer's beneficence with credit to herself, honor to him, or *peace* and safety to his wife!"

"Is she so very beautiful?" was the question surprised from the haughty girl.

"Passing beautiful, I think, Carolyn, and this it is that makes the country gentlemen jest so about the matter. *They* give a far different motive than *benevolence* to the kindness of Captain Clifton to his lovely charge. *I* know that they do him gross injustice! But this thing should not go on. It is a dangerous relation—dangerous to Archer's own fidelity, dangerous to your peace, and most dangerous of all, to the poor girl's reputation. I advise you to speak to Archer. I would do so myself, but it is too delicate a matter for me to speak to a young gentleman about. Now in these palmy days of courtship, he may listen to you as he never would, perhaps, afterwards, and you will be able to prevail with him to send this dangerous young beauty, his protégée, away. Yes! and you may tell Archer that *I* advise this, for the good of all parties. Tell him that the whole neighborhood

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is ringing with gossip that may become slander. Tell him that I say the parties most concerned in this rumor, or in any rumor, will be ever the last to hear it. Tell him that I, his friend Georgia, ventured to do him this service, informing him through you. Let there be no concealments. Let all be open candor. I did feel afraid, when I began to tell you this—but now it is out, I feel relieved—I have more courage."

"Madam!" said Carolyn, more haughtily than before—"Captain Clifton is quite capable of directing his own conduct! And if he were *not*, I should never resign to him the future control of mine! And, furthermore, madam!" she added, sarcastically, "I too highly honor the man about to become my husband—I have too much self-respect and delicacy, to inquire into the nature of Captain Clifton's individual and private amusements, whether they relate to hounds, horses, or beggar girls! I leave such investigations to—— *the daughter of the sign-painter!*" and with an air of the greatest possible scorn and arrogance she arose, and left the room. Yet under that proud, disdainful bearing, a thousand scorpions, of doubt and jealousy, maddened her soul. She went at once into her own room, and having locked the door, that no rash intruder should look upon her weakness, gave herself up to the anguish of her emotions—now pacing up and down the floor, wringing her hands in distraction—now throwing herself, face downward, upon the bed in despair. And yet she had no confidence in Mrs. Clifton's honesty of purpose either.

In the meantime, the party assembled at Hardbargain were enjoying themselves and the hospitalities of their hostess, to the fullest extent.

The late dinner was over; the ladies were lounging about in arm-chairs, or on sofas, in the breezy parlor—dozing, reading, or chatting in low tones, all serenely enjoying that pleasant feeling of home freedom and repose, into which Mrs. Clifton ever charmed her guests.

The gentlemen had left their wine, and in parties of two and three were strolling about the shady yard, or out through the fields and orchards, to cool their heads, previous to joining the ladies at the tea-table.

Archer Clifton, with his cousin, Major Charles Cabell, and Frank Fairfax, took the wooded path leading down the South side of the ridge to a fine spring in the hollow. They came to a log cabin, half hidden by surrounding and overhanging elms—and literally covered with climbing and creeping vines. Before the door sat a girl, spinning on a little wheel, who, at the first glimpse of strangers, instantly arose, and taking up her wheel, retired into the house. Captain Clifton left his companions, and going up to the door, called, saying—

"Catherine, my good girl, bring me a gourd here."

Kate Kavanagh came, and with her eyes fixed upon the

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ground, and her face suffused with a deep blush, handed the required article, and instantly disappeared within.

"By all the angels what a fine face!" exclaimed Major Cabell, gazing after her.

Archer Clifton shot a quick, piercing glance at the speaker, who, meeting it full as he turned, laughed, exclaiming, as if a new discovery had been made—

"Oh! Ay! Soh! you are *there*, are you? So then, this is the mountain-beauty, the hidden treasure of Archer Clifton, that has set all the country ladies agog with scandal, and all the country gentlemen mad with envy?"

The hot blood rushed to Clifton's brow.

"Oh! now, don't be jealous! Don't be alarmed! Your treasure is safe from me—though, by all the queens of chivalry, hers is a noble face—a face to bleed and die for! None of your pretty lily and rose baby beauties that may be seen by hundreds anywhere—but a noble girl, fit for a monarch's love and counsellor!"

In an instant Archer Clifton strode up and stood with bended brow and folded arms before him; and said, in a low, deep, stern tone of concentrated passion—

"You are my relative, friend, guest! Your three-fold claim upon my forbearance should protect you from any resentment for words spoken against my honor. But, I charge you, retract your words! And if you harbor one single suspicion against that young girl, you are a villain! S'death, sir! Has the world come to such a pass, and is the honor of Archer Clifton of so little worth, that he cannot protect a poor young maiden without injury to her? By Heaven! be warned! For if you do but breathe one breath to dim the lustre of that girl's good name—by the good Lord that made us good, and the demon that turned us to evil! relative, friend and guest as you are, I will slay and drag you to her feet to die!"

So sudden, so mighty—so appalling was this burst of passion, that for a moment after it was over, Cabell and Fairfax stood as if transfixed with astonishment. Then Cabell, in the frankest way in the world, held out his hand, exclaiming—

"I like that! D—d if I don't! Come, Clifton—I was wrong, forgive me! give me your hand! By my soul, I like a man that will stand up for—there! by all that's fatal, I had liked to have tripped again!"

"Understand me, sir," said Archer Clifton, sternly. "You know me to be on the eve of marriage with our cousin. She is my liege lady, and never for one instant in thought, word or deed, has my allegiance swerved from her service. And more, gentlemen, both! A single word touching the fair fame of *her*—of Catherine, I mean—touches *me home.*"

They were here overtaken by two or three other gentlemen, and the conversation took another and less perilous turn, as they wandered down towards the mineral spring.

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After slaking their thirst, the party divided. Major Cabell joined the three latest comers, and Clifton and Fairfax turned towards the farm-house.

"You seem to be moody this evening, Archer," said Frank, after they had pursued their way for some time in silence.

"Yes—that foolish jest of Cabell's has annoyed me. It is villanous! It is diabolical! Such light words, in which a young girl's fair fame is laughed and jested away, may be thoughtless, but they should be punished with death!"

"That's a harsh sentence!"

"A *just* one!"

"You feel this bitterly!"

"I DO. For *her* name has been used! Frank! you believe that if a word of disrespect were to be breathed by any man against my mother, I would lay that man dead at my feet without an instant's grace?"

"Yes! I thoroughly believe that you would send such an one to his last account in a great hurry."

"And if any one were but to *look* an insult to Catherine, it would rouse all the ferocity of the demon in me to overthrow and trample him to death!"

"'All this I steadfastly believe,' as the catechism says about total depravity!"

"And, Frank! you yourself have sometimes spoken flippantly of my regard for that girl—never so insultingly as Cabell did just now, else you would not now possess my esteem and friendship—but you have *trifled* with the subject. Now understand, Frank, that I shall consider it a deep personal affront in future if you repeat it!"

"You haven't heard me joke to you about Kate for a long time."

"No—I certainly have not."

"No—for be hanged if the matter is not getting far too *serious* for jesting!"

"What do you mean?"

"Archer! Have you never heard it said that those whom it concerns *first* to be made acquainted with an injurious report are usually the *last* to hear it, and when they are *innocent*, they are the more exposed for *being* innocent, because they never *suspect* the slander, and never *guard* against it?"

"In Heaven's name, what do you mean?"

"*This.* Cabell's jest was but the echo of the whole country talk. I have been asked, I suppose, twenty times, by twenty different young men, to tell them all about our adventure upon the mountain."

"That was because *you* first of all represented it as an adventure."

"I confess it! In shame and confusion I confess it—but then many times I am also asked what is the precise nature of the relations subsisting between yourself and this girl?"

"NO, NO!"

"Yes, I tell you!"

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"No! no one dares to question that!"

"But they *do*, I tell you! Ay, and *answer* their own questions in a manner that reflects very little honor upon the parties!"

"Would God I had never seen the girl! Would God I had never brought her here! I would give my right hand rather than evil should befall her! But WHO is it that dares slander her? Tell me! Give me some name! Let me have SOME one to make an example of!"

"Nay, Clifton! you can't make an example of women and children!" said Frank, evasively.

"By Heaven, sir, they have husbands and fathers, who shall be held accountable for the license of tongue they allow their wives and daughters!"

"Nay, now, Archer! This is a mere matter of gossip, that will die out, if you are discreet!"

"To dare to talk of *her!* They never looked upon her face! Else they never could associate the thought of evil with that noble brow, those thoughtful eyes, and serious lips! To slander *her!*"

"Nay, nay—it is not slander; only what I am afraid should *become* such. It is only fun—joke—"

"To dare to joke of *her!*"

"'*Her!*' Verily, Clifton, any one to hear you breathe '*her!*' with your full soul's volume poured into the little word, would think there was but one '*her*' in the world! Archy, you take a very strange interest in that girl. Are you sure that you are not in love with her?"

"In love with her! Nonsense—she is a child!"

"Well then, are you sure you should not be in love with her, if she were a woman?"

"Ridiculous! She is a low-born girl!"

"Oh, I forgot! I beg pardon! You demonstrated that to me before."

"And, besides, sir, please to remember that all my love and faith are due to my cousin, Miss Clifton; and that *she* has my whole heart! I love, admire, honor, my beautiful betrothed bride—nor for her proud sake will I brook that any one should think it possible that I could even in thought fail in full loyalty to my liege lady! But, Frank! my soul's dear brother! as I tell you everything, I will tell you this! that I feel the very deepest interest in Catherine's welfare! If you ask me *why*—I tell you I do not know! It surprises and confounds myself! But from the first moment I looked upon her noble face, I felt that interest stir within my deepest soul. And it has never since ceased!"

"I swear you are enamored of her!"

"Preposterous, Frank! you make me angry! It is a very different thing from being enamored of her, let me tell you! There is my beautiful, but cold and scornful bride, up at Clifton! Well, I am the most patient of all adoring slaves! I

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wait upon her sovereign eyes all day long! I am proud to submit to her whims—to do her lightest bidding, and pick up her lap-dog—or to obey the severest command, and exile myself from her gracious presence all day long! But now observe the difference! I feel a deep, strong, strange interest in Kate. I cannot account for it, I feel a sort of unratified right of property in her. I wish to do her good. But I wish that all the good she may ever possess in the world, may come from me only! and that for all good things with which I cannot supply her, she may *suffer* the want rather than owe their possession to another! Very like *love*, is it not? But I wish to control her destiny! I wish to have her in my power!—*in all honor, however!* It galls me to think that I have no right of authority or guardianship over her! I ardently desire such a right! I long to have the disposal of her person and fate! I crave with a frantic craving, to have more than a father's—more than a husband's—more than a master's right over her! I would to God she were born mine—my own—body, soul, and spirit! My own to use or abuse—to crown or kill, as I listed!" exclaimed Clifton, passionately, while his cheeks and very lips were white and dry, and his eyes burned with a fierce, consuming, inward fire. And forgetting all things real, he felt as in a vision, a girl's spirit swoop down upon his bosom, and a dream voice murmur in his ear—"Oh! if it will give you one instant's joy to press me strongly to your heart—crush me to death in the fold, and my soul will exhale in rapture to Heaven." The fervid vision came and passed like lightning, and Clifton roused himself from reverie, with a smile and a sneer saying—"Very like love, all that! is it not?"

But as Frank did not reply, and as they had now arrived at the gate leading into the yard, the conversation ceased.

The early tea-table was set out under the shade of the great oaks, and the ladies were walking about, taking the evening air in the yard. As supper was only waiting the arrival of Captain Clifton and Mr. Fairfax, it was now speedily served.

After tea was over, the carriages were all brought round and the company took leave of Mrs. Clifton, and departed.

Captain Clifton and Mr. Fairfax were the last to leave. They mounted their horses and took the bridle-path down the mountain-side. This separated them from the rest of their party, who went by the road. They did not, however converse. Frank was thoughtful, and Clifton himself buried in a deep reverie.

It was quite early when they arrived at White Cliffs; and the remainder of the party had not yet arrived. Mr. Fairfax joined Mrs. Clifton in the garden, and Archer Clifton sought his lady-love, where he was informed he would find her, namely, in the Summer saloon. He threw down his hat and entered hurriedly, intending to surprise from her a hasty

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kiss. Carolyn was standing looking out of the window upon the rich sunset scene—the last sun that would set upon her maiden life, perhaps, she thought. On seeing Clifton she moved away, and retreated to the work-table at which she seated herself. Clifton approached, and with an air of gallantry, half serious, half playful, kneeled upon one knee and kissed her hand. She drew it coldly away—but that was the custom of the "proud ladie," and did not surprise her lover. He arose and drew a chair to her side and seated himself, and began to affect an interest in her little lady-like occupations. Her right hand rested upon a pile of beautifully fine linen cambric handkerchiefs—an item in the imported trousseau. He laid his hand upon hers, and asked her some trivial question about them.

Now, Carolyn, after a day's extreme suffering, had almost gained a victory over her passion. Her haughtiness had almost saved her. Not to one soul in that house—not to Georgia, had she betrayed the least sign of the cruel suspicion that had nearly maddened her brain. Not for all Clifton—not for all the world would she have betrayed her passion to her lover—or condescended to admit that she could be jealous of him; for she felt that once to accuse him would be to impose upon her the necessity of breaking with him. How could she, in honor, marry a man to-morrow whom to-day she had accused of treachery?—besides, she was not sure—could never be sure of his moral dereliction. And while there was a doubt in his favor, she must conquer or conceal all suspicion, or, letting escape, must break with him, even at this moment—must break with him for ever! At least so her high spirit and her pride argued. She could not part with him—pride forbade that also.—What! the marriage of Miss Clifton of Clifton broken off at the last moment, and all about a mountain-girl? Pah! Forbid it, all the shades of all the buried Cliftons! Hearts might break, but haughty heads must not be bowed! Better lost peace than lost place! And then she loved him!—loved him the deeper for suppressing all signs of love!—and she could not bear to lose him! And banish him she must, if she should once betray the jealous passion of her heart. This mighty motive kept down the rising storm. Yet all depended upon her vigilant self-control. Should a look, a word of suspicion, escape her then, she felt the curbed frenzy of her soul would have broken all bounds; even as by the smallest fracture in the dyke, the mighty and irresistible sea is let in upon the land, carrying destruction and death before it! All depended on her silence. So, to keep her lover from noticing her mood,—or fatally inquiring its cause—and to give him employment, she pushed the pile of handkerchiefs towards him, saying calmly—

"Mark them for me."

Clifton smilingly took them, found the little vial of indelible ink, and went to work—himself well pleased to have

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some service to perform for his liege lady, that would, without disrespect to *her*, deliver *him* from the duty of keeping up a running conversation, for which he felt indisposed.

She need not have feared that Archer Clifton would observe her mood. He himself was too abstracted, too thoughtful, to be critical or inquisitive. He was deeply troubled by the recollection of the conversations of the afternoon, affecting Kate Kavanagh. Instead of benefiting, had he really wronged that excellent girl?—darkened the very morning of her just opening life with the clouds of suspicion? And was even his mother's protection insufficient to shield her innocence from such attacks of slander? Yes!—for the *fact* of his mother's protection was not even acknowledged. Slander shuts its eyes to truth, while it opens its lips to falsehood. Should he send her back to the mountain, and expose her to all the evil of that life? No, no!—his whole heart protested against that course. Yet what to do to save her? He could not decide then. He could not even get his own consent to consult his mother. What! wound *her* ear with the repetition of such a story? Never! His usual promptitude of decision and action forsook him quite. A cry was in his heart, and he could only repeat to himself her *name* in deep sorrow,—"Oh, Kate! Kate! Kate Kavanagh!" until her very name "*Kate Kavanagh*," became the refrain of a plaintive *silent* melody! Meantime he pursued his occupation quite mechanically, marking and laying down, one by one, the handkerchiefs, until the whole dozen was complete.

Carolyn Clifton watched his complete and mournful abstraction with increasing suspicion.

When all the handkerchiefs were marked, he took the parcel, and shaking off sad thought, smilingly laid them before his lady's eyes, gayly entreating her to examine his work and reward him with a kindly word if it should please her.

Miss Clifton took up the parcel, her eyes fell upon the topmost handkerchief, and she started violently. She swiftly turned it over and looked at the second, and the blood rushed to her brow! At the third, and it receded again, leaving her pale as death! She hurriedly went through the dozen, then springing to her feet, she hurled the parcel to the floor, and setting her heel upon it, lifted her proud form to its loftiest height, and stood, her chest expanded, her head thrown back, her cheek kindling, her eyes blazing,—full! full!—yet proudly suppressing all utterance of passion! Captain Clifton started to his feet, exclaiming—

"Carolyn, my dear cousin!"

But spurning the parcel beneath her heel, she turned imperiously away, and walked up the room.

He followed her, repeating—

"Carolyn, my dearest Carolyn! what is it?"

Turning and flashing upon him her fierce, imperious eyes, she stretched out her arm, and pointed in scornful silence to the handkerchiefs on the floor.

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He went and picked them up to examine them. Oh! treacherous absence of mind! Oh! fatal refrain of the mental melody! Oh! horror of horrors! Catastrophe of catastrophes! Upon every handkerchief was beautifully marked—"KATE KAVANAGH."

"Confirmation strong
As proof from Holy Writ."

Ay, and a great deal stronger, as sight is more convincing than faith! What was to be done? It was in vain to deny or attempt to explain it! Yet he must try, even if he should make himself ridiculous. Hurling the fatal "handkerchiefs" down with virulence, he sprang to the side of the outraged and indignant beauty; seized her hand, exclaiming, vehemently—

"My dearest love—pardon! pardon! This is all a mistake!"

Spurning his clasp from her hand, she turned away in arrogant silence.

Dropping upon one knee, he took her hand again, and looking up in her face, said, in a voice of entreaty—

"My Carolyn! this is all a mistake!—the most absurd mistake! The effect of the merest absence of mind! The most ridiculous thing!"

"Oh, sir!" she answered, with slow and withering scorn, drawing her hand away again, "I do not doubt it was a mistake. I never supposed you would dare an intentional insult to my father's daughter!"

"But, Carolyn, my dearest cousin, only permit me to explain—"

"Oh, sir, I *entreat* you spare me the humiliation of hearing the story!" she sneered, with curling lip.

"But, Carolyn, my dear, loved bride! My bride, that will be, to-morrow—if you will allow me to tell you all the simple truth—the *reason* why this young girl's name ran in my head so."

"Oh, sir," she exclaimed, raising both hands, and turning away her head in loathing—"I *implore* you!—I most *humbly beseech* you to forbear! Spare me *details* that might shock my—delicacy!"

"Carolyn," he said, gravely and reproachfully rising, and taking her hand—"this does not become you."

Throwing off his hand, with scorn and indignation, she replied—

"It would less become me, sir, to listen to the history you would tell." Then subsiding into a mood of contemptuous irony, she said, with a sneering smile—"Believe me, sir, I feel more disgusted at your bad taste than shocked at your sin, or wronged by your bad faith. *A mountain-girl!* Truly, I am humiliated to think so base a rival should have moved me—even to contempt. I am dishonored, sir, in that. Had your wandering fancy fixed upon one of my cousins—one of the elegant Misses Cabell, I might have mourned your infi-

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delity, but should have been saved this deep humiliation for myself, and this utter contempt for you—but *a mountain-girl!* A coarse, ignorant, ill-bred mountain-girl! *Oh-h-h!* that you should have stooped, or I should have been moved, by so low a creature as that! I could bury my head with shame!"

"Carolyn!" he said, sternly, "permit me to inform you—"

"No, SIR!" she exclaimed, scorn writhing her lips, indignation flashing from her eyes—"No, SIR! You shall tell me NOTHING! It would ill-become my mother's daughter to listen to the revolting history of—your base amour with the mountain-girl!"

Yes, in the bitterness of her passion, she forgot her maiden delicacy, and spoke those shameful words to his astonished ears!

"Miss Clifton!" he replied, severely, folding his arms and gazing sternly and steadily into her blushing face—for she was already blushing for her temerity—until she quailed before him—"Miss Clifton, you mistake my purpose—I have no intention, *now*, to explain anything—the man who would condescend to *deny* so base a crime as you have charged upon me—is not too high or pure to commit it. Therefore, I deign to say nothing for myself. But for the admirable girl that you have slandered—I will say *this:* Had a *man* dared to asperse the fair fame of Catherine Kavanagh—though that man had been my bosom friend—he should have expiated his falsehood with his life:—Had any other *woman* breathed a breath of slander on her—her husband or her father should have atoned for the fault:—For yourself, Miss Clifton—you shall retract your words, before ever I shall call you wife!"

This roused her passion to ungovernable fury. Turning ghastly white, while the light seemed to leap from her eyes, she exclaimed, in a low, deep, intense tone—

"DEATH, sir! Do you threaten me? Insult me in my father's house? Leave it! You are unworthy to stand upon this floor! BEGONE!" And reaching out her hand, she seized the bell cord, and rang a peal that presently brought a servant to the door. The advent of a third party, though that party was a menial, constrained the lady to remember herself. Miss Clifton was her cold, serene, dignified self again. Turning to the servant she said, haughtily, "Show Captain Clifton to the front door, and bring round his horse, instantly. He returns to Hardbargain, to-night." And she bowed to Clifton, and calmly and imperiously walked from the room.

The man stood waiting and bowing. Captain Clifton snatched his hat, saying—

"Let my horse be brought round, without delay, Dandy, and tell your master, when he returns, that he shall hear from me at Hardbargain."

When the man had bowed and retired, Captain Clifton passed out through the open leaf of the window, into the

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piazza, and thence down into the lawn, to speak to Frank who was just entering from the garden with Mrs. Clifton on his arm.

Georgia saw at a glance, that her train of gunpowder had caught, and the magazine had blown up, and her dark beautiful, demoniac, witching face lighted up with a lurid joy for one unguarded instant, and then all was self-recollection, self-control, and sweet, smooth, serene, alluring glamour.

Bowing deeply to Mrs. Clifton, he said—

"Madam, an unexpected event sends me from Clifton this evening. Pray make my adieus to my uncle and cousin. And permit me to commend my friend here to your hospitable care until such time as he pleases to become my guest at Hardbargain—if, indeed, he will not ride thither with me to night," he added, turning to Frank.

Fairfax was too surprised to speak.

Mrs. Clifton, who was not surprised at all, yet affected much interest, said archly—

"Oh, but we shall see you back very early to-morrow morning!"

"I regret to add, madam, that it is not likely," he said, with another bow; then turning to Frank, he asked—

"Will you ride with me to-night, Fairfax?"

Frank glanced at the lady on his arm, and then looking rebukingly at Clifton, begged to be excused.

"Well, then, you are my guest, Fairfax, and my mother has often pressed you to give her a few weeks of your company. Join me at Hardbargain as soon as possible—the sooner the better. To-morrow even—"

"*To-morrow!*" archly smiled the wily lady. "*To-morrow*, I fancy, his attendance and your own will be required *here*. Do you *forget?*—Well, that is the worst instance of absence of mind I ever saw or heard of! A young bridegroom to forget, for an instant, his wedding-day! Too bad, even for *you*, the notoriously-absent-minded Archer Clifton!"

Not wishing to enter into explanations, Captain Clifton merely replied with another bow—a most convenient, safe and polite manner of answer, since, without lack of courtesy, it committed nothing.

Then, taking leave of both lady and gentleman, and repeating his invitation to Frank, he turned and went to take his horse from the servant that held it, threw himself up into the saddle, and, with a parting wave of his hat, rode away at full speed.

"Clifton looks darkly—what can be the matter?" asked Frank.

"Oh, nothing! probably Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain, has been troubled with some refractory servant, and has sent for her son to come up and reduce him to order—or possibly there may be some dispute or difficulty in settling the demands of the hired harvest hands. They are often even dishonest in their extortions."

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"Deferring to your better judgment madam, still, I fear not! I think such trifles would scarcely have raised so dark a thunder-cloud upon Clifton's brow," said Frank.

"Oh, well! At worst it is but some lover's quarrel with his most exacting queen, Carolyn!" playfully replied the lady.

Frank was not satisfied—he was pained. This most dangerous dark beauty fascinated and frightened him by turns. He had never seen the fiend in her face since that first night, and her witching power had almost erased the remembrance of it from his mind. Indeed, if he had ever recollected it, it was with wonder and remorse that he should have ever read such fearful meaning in a lady's frown, and he ascribed it to the phantasmagoria of his own fatigued nerves and over-excited brain. But now he felt vaguely anxious, suspicious, foreboding—he scarce knew wherefore. He had no reason to reply to the lady again, for at the instant she finished speaking, the carriages drove into the yard, bringing the company from Hardbargain, and they walked forward to welcome them home.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SEVERED HEARTS.

Alas! how slight a cause may move
Dissension between hearts that love—
Hearts that the world in vain had tried,
And sorrow but more closely tied;
That stood the storm when waves were rough,
Yet in a sunny hour fell off,
Like ships that have gone down at sea,
When Heaven was all tranquillity!
A something light as air—a look—
A word unkind or wrongly taken;
Oh, love that tempests never shook,
A breath—a touch like this hath shaken.—MOORE.

SOME hours after the arrival of the company, old Mr. Clifton sat alone in his study, examining piles of accounts, merchants,' mechanics', and hired laborers' bills, that had come in as usual upon the first of July, many weeks before, yet had not, up to this night, been settled. For many years past the financial affairs of the Master of Clifton had been falling behindhand. The cause of this was that no plantation and plantation house can thoroughly succeed without the personal superintendence of an efficient *mistress* to assist the master's effort. Often, indeed, it happens, that while the master, himself is engaged in state politics, or off at the legislature or at congress, or on the circuit as a judge of the court, or in the metropolis of the state, or of the nation, holding some high office under the government—the mistress, at home upon the plantation, is the main-spring of all its business—superintending—not only the house and house-maids, with their multifarious cares and avocations, such as a city housewife cannot conceive of, but managing the plantation also—keep-

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ing overseer to his duty, adjudging equitably all difficulties that may arise between him and the slaves under his charge —looking over all the numerous accounts, paying debts, and, when necessary, retrenching expenses. Now the Clifton plantation had been singularly unfortunate in a series of inefficient mistresses, even before it fell in regular succession to the present Mr. Clifton. And after that, affairs were worse than ever. His first wife, the haughty Miss Gower, the mother of Carolyn, was far too great a lady to look after a housekeeper and overseer, and her successors had been all young girls, very worthless, except as pets and playthings, and who had, besides, to be indulged every year with their winters in Richmond, or in Washington—a two-fold evil, as it took the master from his plantation and men, and the mistress from her house and maids, and laid them, besides, under the heavy expense of city hotel living, dressing, dinner-giving, theatres, balls, concerts, etc. Once in awhile, as a bridal treat, or at the successive "coming out" of daughters, a winter in the metropolis may be well enough. But when continued year after year, through a lifetime, to the total neglect of the plantation, the revenues of no ordinary estate will hold out. So it followed, that as the master and mistress ceased to look after the overseer and the housekeeper, the overseer and housekeeper ceased to look after the men and maids, and the men and maids grew careless and indolent in the performance of their duties. Thus, as the expenses rose, the income fell. And thus, at the present time, old Mr. Clifton was almost irredeemably in debt, and all the Clifton property, except the land, mortgaged to its full value. The mortgagee might foreclose at any instant. And at this present moment, the poor old master of great Clifton had not the ready money to pay his harvest hands. The extent of his liabilities was, however, so little known in the neighborhood, that his credit was still good, and almost high—and the estate of White Cliffs was still considered as one of the most prosperous in the county, and the owners still held as very enviable people. While old Mr. Clifton sat pondering most dismally over his impracticable accounts, the study door was suddenly thrown open, and Miss Clifton entered, in great excitement, and threw herself into a chair before her father, exclaiming,

"Father, I have been insulted!"

The old man, never indifferent to his children's cry—ever ready in the midst of his own real cares, to hear and sympathize even with their fantastic griefs—looked up from his papers in perplexity, inquiring—

"What is it? What did you say, my child?"

"I have been insulted!—outraged, sir!"

The old man gazed at her in surprise, repeating—

"'Insulted, outraged!'"

"Yes, sir! contemned, despised, scorned, insulted, outraged, *rejected!*"

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The old man placed his hands upon the arms of the chair, and gazed in astonishment, exclaiming—

"'Insulted!—outraged!' Whom? You, my daughter! Miss Clifton! *Impossible.*"

"Yes, sir! I—your daughter—Carolyn Clifton!"

"Who has presumed—who has dared—?"

"Captain Clifton, sir, 'has dared!'" replied the indignant beauty, rising in her excitement.

The old gentleman stared at her in blank wonder for a minute, and then—taking her hand—

"Sit down—sit down—sit down—sit down," he kept repeating, "and tell me all about it."

Carolyn drank a glass of ice water that stood near her on the table, and then, in a cooler manner, told her father exactly what had passed, and how it had finally ended.

The old gentleman scratched his snow-white head in vexation and perplexity, but the winter bloom of his broad, rosy, face, was neither heightened nor lowered at the hearing of the tale. He did not by any means display the indignation the offended beauty had expected.

"Well, sir!" at last she said, rather haughtily, "what do you say to this?"

He put his arm fondly around her waist, and drew her to him, saying, caressingly—

"You're a fool, Carolyn! A vain, jealous little fool, that's all! Nay, now!—no airs with your old father! According to your own showing, it has been Archer that has been 'contemned, despised, scorned, insulted, outraged, rejected!' and the rest of it—and upon no just grounds, either! as I can easily prove to you. I am very much mortified—deeply humbled, indeed, to hear that my daughter, a high-born young maiden, should have forgotten her feminine pride and delicacy, and reproached her lover with an intimacy with a mountain-girl—a race of women, with very few exceptions so low and wretched, that a young lady should ignore their very existence. Oh, my conscience, Carolyn! why do you not cover your face, and die with humiliation? I do not wonder a man of such high honor and delicate sensibility as Archer Clifton, should have been shocked and disgusted. Nay, my child!—no airs with me! No tossing of the head, and curling of the lip with me! I am your father. You must listen to me. You have done Archer the most outrageous injustice. And your jealousy is as ridiculous as it is indelicate. In the first place, this girl, though brought up on the mountain, comes of respectable, if humble parentage, and possesses, by all accounts, a higher toned moral and intellectual nature than most young *ladies* are endowed with. She is as far removed from vice as my own Carolyn! In the second place, she is the protégée of *Mrs.* Clifton, as well as of Captain Clifton, and enjoys that excellent lady's esteem and friendship, spending half of every day in her company, ex-

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cept when visitors are at the house. In the third and last place, she is not a beautiful woman, but an ugly child—being scarcely fourteen years of age, and having the ugliest face I ever saw in my life—at least *I* think so, though Mrs. Clifton says it is a noble face. It has large features, and is full of strength and expression, like a boy's. There, now, that's all! Now! what do you think of yourself?"

During this short explanation, Carolyn's beautiful countenance had changed expression as rapidly and as variously as during the lay of the minstrel the harp changes and varies its notes. At its close she dropped down by the side of the old man, and throwing her arms and her head upon his knees in utter weakness and dejection, sobbed—

"Father! how shall I *ever* be forgiven?"

He raised her to his knee, and putting his arm around her waist, drew her head upon his bosom, and said—

"It is an ugly lover's quarrel, certainly, my love! And Archer Clifton is as proud as you are! But it must be made up! It must be made up! A very ugly quarrel, indeed. And on the eve of your marriage, too! But it must be made up! It must be made up! Ah, doubtless he will be over to-morrow night! He feels as bad as you do, I'll warrant he does! I'll warrant he does! I should, I know, if I were he!"

"Ah, father! no, he does not! He was in the right! I was in the wrong!"

"Yes! you were wrong, Carry! And I hope it will be a lesson to you! But that makes no difference in his feelings, not a whit! He suffers as much as you do! Why, when I have a difficulty with my poor little pet, Georgia, if she is ever so wrong, and I ever so right, I am nevertheless the most miserable man alive!"

"Ah, father, but there is a great difference—I am not Archer's pet, but was to be his consort. We—Archer and myself, are nearly equal in station, ay, education, disposition, and so are more responsible for our conduct towards each other!" sighed Carolyn, dropping her head dejectedly upon his bosom.

"Oh, well! now if you are so full of doubts and fears! it is but ten o'clock! I will mount my horse, and ride up to Hardbargain, and knock the young gentleman up—I doubt if he is asleep!—and bring him back here, to-night!"

"Not for the world! Not for ten thousand worlds!" exclaimed the proud girl, vehemently.

"Ah, then I don't know what to do with you—go to bed, and try to sleep, and if you can't do that, ring for the housekeeper, and make her give you some of her nostrums, to put you to sleep! And go into a state of non-existence, that shall obliterate the time between this and to-morrow morning. And to-morrow, I'll warrant Archer will be here to breakfast with us, and to beg *your* pardon for the sins that

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you committed! for that's the end of all lovers' quarrels! No matter who's right and who's wrong—who's sinned against, and who's sinning, the gentleman has to do the penance! There! kiss me, and be off with you!—and hark ye, Carolyn! don't forget to kneel down and pray Heaven to give you the grace of a meeker temper!"

Carolyn Clifton went to her room and retired to bed, to heat her pillow with her feverish head, to wet it with her hot tears—to sigh, and groan, and toss, and sob all night. This bitter, bitter quarrel, was the first trouble the girl had ever had in all her favored life. And she was impatient with it, indignant at it. She was angry with herself for her injustice and indelicacy; angry with Clifton for not forcing upon her the explanation she would not consent to receive, but which, had she been forced to hear, would have arrested the quarrel, and saved this cruel suffering; angry at the tedious night, that lingered so long, keeping her in agonizing suspense; angry at the morning, that delayed its coming, and bringing her the peace and joy of a reconciliation. And so she tossed, and groaned, and suffered, like one in high fever, while the long, long night was slowly, slowly passing away.

In the meantime Captain Clifton had ridden away, not so angry as shocked, repulsed and alienated by the unprecedented behaviour of his lady-love. He disliked all demonstrations of emotion, and detested all exhibitions of evil passion in a woman. It was the high-bred delicacy and refinement—the queenly placidity—the cool reserve and stately dignity of Carolyn Clifton, that had attracted his first admiration. And though he sometimes gallantly complained of her cruelty, he would not have had her manner one degree warmer. But now this fair, cool, peerless queen o'er herself and her emotions, had yielded to passions that might govern a serving-maid—to suspicion, jealousy, and fierce anger—had descended to virulent, vituperative abuse! And henceforth, she was discrowned, and degraded from her pride of place.

He arrived at Hardbargain—gave his horse in charge of a servant, and entered the house.

The candles were just lighted in the parlor, and Mrs. Clifton and her favorite Kate sat sewing by the work-stand. As he entered, Kate arose as usual with the intention of withdrawing, but he signed to her with his hand, and said in a tone of command—

"No—stay, Catherine, and once for all give up that habit of retiring as soon as myself or any other visitor enters."

The young girl returned to her seat and resumed her work. Then with a sort of spirit of persecution upon him, as one would think, he went to the maiden and inquired, impatiently,

"*Why* do you always do that? *Why* do you always rise and leave as soon as any one enters the room?"

She glanced up at him with those large, shy eyes, and in-

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stantly veiled them again, while the blush deepened on her cheek. Her heart—her disobedient, rebellious heart, that would not be calm when she bade it—was beating fast against her bosom, as it ever beat, when he looked at her, or spoke to her. To have saved her soul alive, she could not have put her motive into words, and told him that she ever feared her society, or even her presence, might not be as acceptible to Mrs. Clifton's visitors as it was to that kind lady herself. She only bowed her head and blushed the deeper that she could not answer, and yet deeper still, that she felt him gazing on her. He *was* gazing on her!—gazing down on that beautiful, dark auburn hair, rippling and glittering under the light of the lamp—on that broad monarchial forehead, on those even eyebrows and long eyelashes, dropping fine shadows on the glowing cheek—yes! gazing and thinking of Major Cabell's enthusiastic admiration, and wondering why all the world did not agree with him in thinking that countenance grandly beautiful! Yet even while admiring her so much, he spoke angrily, and said—

"Catherine! You have a second habit even worse than the first! Lately you have taken up the practice of not replying to me when I ask you a question—and when you are obliged to raise your eyes to mine, you drop them instantly as if mine burnt them. Now I have always disliked and suspected eyes that cannot look freely into *other* eyes!"

At this the very forehead of the girl burned with a crimson flush. Clifton took hold of her hand, which fluttered in his own like a frightened bird, and said, in a kinder tone—

"Come, my child! see now if you can look me honestly in the face, and tell me why you will not talk to me?"

But Kate's distress became so great that Mrs. Clifton interposed, and said—

"*Do*, Archer, leave her alone! It does seem to me, son, that you take a malicious pleasure in tormenting that poor girl because she is so shy! Don't mind him, Kate! He has been a tease ever since he was a boy, when he used to pull the ears of kittens and puppy dogs. Take up your work, child, and hurry on with it. And you, Archer! I am as much surprised as pleased to see you back here to-night. To what am I indebted for the pleasure?"

"My dear mother, I will tell you after awhile—let me be quiet now a little time."

And Mrs. Clifton looked up in surprise, and noticed, for the first time, how deeply troubled was Archer Clifton's face. After watching him a few minutes as he sat and watched Kate, she said, suddenly—

"Oh! I have a letter for you—arrived by the afternoon mail. Henny brought it from the post-office this evening after you left. Perhaps it was in quest of that you came, and its contents may dispel your uneasiness," and rising, the lady went to the card rack, hanging above the mantel-piece, and

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brought him a letter, which he tore open and read hastily. Then starting up, he exclaimed, "Good! Good! Most excellent, most opportune!"

"What is it, my dear Archer? I am very glad it gives you such satisfaction, at any rate! What is it?"

"An order from head-quarters to join my regiment immediately, to take command of a detachment to march within ten days for the Indian frontier—to put down an insurrection there!"

"No!" exclaimed the lady in amazement.

"Yes, indeed, my good mother!" replied Archer Clifton, exultingly.

"*No!* You astonish me! Ordered upon active duty—upon distant and dangerous service at the very time you are about to be married! Call you that opportune—fortunate? I call it most *in*opportune, *un*fortunate!"

"Ah! madam, you do not know! What, and if my marriage were already broken off! Is it not lucky—I mean providential, that I can join my regiment immediately, and depart for a distant scene, and active service, in which I may forget the sorrow and the humiliation!"

"Your marriage broken off? What? Now, at the last moment? A marriage that has been looked forward to for so many years? To be broken off when every thing is ready! Impossible, it cannot be!"

"I assure you upon my word, madam, it is but too true!"

"Why—what—*do* you tell me?" exclaimed the lady, in increasing astonishment. "When did it happen? What caused it? Had Mr. Clifton anything to do with it?"

"It happened this evening after my return to Clifton. Mr. Clifton had nothing whatever to do with it—not having reached home at the time it occurred. It was occasioned by a most humiliating quarrel between myself and Miss Clifton!"

"Oh, a quarrel! A lovers' quarrel! That is nothing! Though, in truth, it surprises me that the calm, proud Carolyn should descend to such a thing, as it does that my own son should deign to take a part in it. But it is really nothing! Such things occur in almost every courtship!"

"And those who quarrel in courtship should never venture upon matrimony."

"Ah! that is an inhuman, unfaithful sentiment, my son! Young people are like other young natures, petulant, vain, irascible, exacting—but life trains them into modesty, sobriety, forbearance. For this quarrel, Archer, it must be adjusted! It shall be to-morrow morning!"

"No, madam, it shall not! This quarrel is irreconcilable, believe me!"

"Pooh, pooh! *What! with Carolyn?* Nonsense!"

"Mother! you shall judge! She has descended from her high place of maidenly pride and delicacy, and betraying the most revolting phases of suspicion, jealousy and fierce anger, she has charged me with infidelity, base treachery and vice!"

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"Dreadful! dreadful! as all angry words and acts ever are! *But not unpardonable!* Spoken in the frenzy of passion—they will be retracted to-morrow! And then you must be reconciled. Things must go on as they have been planned. There must be no discreditable exposure of this affray. The marriage must take place, as proposed, to-morrow evening. Then, if you *must* join your regiment, why it will be easily *understood* that you must. And there will be no reproach under those circumstances in leaving your newly wedded bride under her father's protection!"

"Impossible, madam! Miss Clifton has to-night exhibited her character and disposition in such revolting colors, that I can never, never take her to my bosom!"

"You are angry now, Archer! You will think better of it! I trust in Heaven you may do so before there is an exposure. Think what will be the astonishment of the wedding company who will assemble to-morrow evening—the mortification of the family at Clifton, and worse than all, the scandal! the nine days wonder!"

"I thought my dear mother had too strong a mind to fear these bugbears of the little, when a just occasion for meeting and braving them occurs."

"But I do not consider this an adequate occasion. That this quarrel will be finally adjusted, I firmly believe. And I think it a pity and a shame that to-morrow evening, three hundred guests should be disappointed and dispersed, to spread a subject of speculation and scandal all over the country. And this merely because you will yet a little longer indulge your anger!"

"I am not angry, mother. If I were only angry I should let the marriage go on, if Miss Clifton thought proper to do so, for I should know that my anger would pass away. No, I am not angry, mother, but shocked, repulsed, and totally estranged. I could no more marry Miss Clifton now, than I could take any other loathed object to my bosom! The idea makes me shudder!"

"Still I affirm that all this is intense anger, nothing else, and that there will come a reaction. Why in anger, Archer, the object is as much loathed as in love it is desired—but *that* is temporary, and *this*, I hope, you will find permanent, I hope, at bottom, you respect Carolyn? *I esteem* her. She has been a spoiled child, but has so many undeveloped good qualities, that she only wants the discipline of a little affection to make her a very excellent woman. I shall say no more about this affair to-night, but wait to see what disposition I shall find you in to-morrow!"

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and instantly afterwards Henny came in and informed her mistress that Mr. Kavanagh had come to take his sister home.

"Ask Mr. Kavanagh to sit down in the hall. Put up your sewing, Catherine, my dear!" said the lady.

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Catherine arose to fold up her work, while Captain Clifton looked very much as if he would like to stop her again.

"Does she not remain with you at night, madam?"

"Certainly not—her brother always comes for her at bed-time."

"How early does she come in the morning?"

"She never comes in the morning. Catherine has her own domestic affairs to attend to during the forenoon. She never gets here till late in the afternoon."

"Then I shall not see her to-morrow—not see her again for many months—perhaps *never* see her again! Come here, Catherine!"

Catherine came to his side, and stood, as usual, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and her cheek painfully flushed. He took her hand and pressed it in his own, while he said,—

"Catherine! you have heard all that passed between myself and Mrs. Clifton, this evening?"

A quick, short, but not ungraceful nod was all her answer.

"And you know that I am going away on a distant and dangerous service; I leave here very early in the morning—I may never come back, Catherine," he said, slowly, looking at her steadily.

Her hand in his grew cold—her cheek paled—her heart stopped still as death—but no word did she speak in reply.

"Catherine! before I go, I intend to give you a command—do you hear me?"

A spasmodic nod was her reply.

"I may be gone many years. In the meanwhile you will grow up to womanhood, Catherine; do not have any lovers—*beaux*—as young girls call them, while I am away—and above all things, do not choose a husband without first consulting me through my mother."

Not knowing what to reply to this, Catherine remained perfectly silent.

"Will you obey me in this, girl?" he asked, rather impatiently.

A low, earnest choking "Yes sir," was her answer.

"Kiss me, then! for I may never return," said Archer Clifton, folding her for one moment to his bosom, and pressing a kiss upon her full lips.

But her lips grew cold at the touch—her face paled and fell away from his bosom—her form drooped and sank back over his arm, where she lay like one dead, in a swoon.

Surprised, alarmed, Clifton raised her in both arms, and hastened to the lounge, where he laid her, calling to his mother. The lady came forward without any trepidation, and bringing a bottle of Hungary water, began to chafe her temples and face, and finally gave that task to Clifton, while she herself loosened Kate's dress.

"What could have been the cause of this, mother? Is she subject to these attacks?"

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"I never knew her faint before, though I have seen her under very trying circumstances with that old man, her grandfather."

"What could have occasioned it?"

"Why, the sudden news of your going away on dangerous service, of course," said Mrs. Clifton, as she resumed the bottle, and continued to chafe the girl's face and hands. "The child loves you, Archer; she has a very grateful, affectionate heart, and very strong feeling. She loves us both. And when you bade her good-bye, for a long and perilous absence, is it strange she should have been overcome? When *soldiers* talk of danger, *children* may be forgiven for being frightened. Do go and tell Kavanagh that Kate must remain here to-night, and dismiss him."

He went, and before he came back again, Kate, with a long drawn sigh, had opened her eyes and recovered.

"You must raise her, and take her up stairs, my dear Archer. She must suffer no more agitation to-night," said Mrs. Clifton.

And he lifted the form of Catherine, and took her up stairs, while his mother called Henny. When they had laid the young girl on a bed, and left her to the care of Henny, and had returned to the parlor again—Captain Clifton said—

"Mother! take care of that girl! She has been the innocent, unconscious cause of my trouble to-day, but I cannot feel dislike or even indifference towards her. Take care of that humble maiden, mother, as if she were your daughter and my sister. Don't let any rustic beaux come near her, mother. I cannot endure the idea of her marrying, or even being wooed by any low, miserable fellow of her brother's grade. And do not permit any young gentleman of the neighborhood to trifle with her heart, or endanger her good name. You know how easily, even without her fault, that sole possession of a poor maiden is lost. The thought that such an unmerited misfortune should befall Kate, exasperates me beyond measure, and I feel like quarreling with the whole order of society!"

"What, you! the proud conservator of rank! Truly Archer, one would think Carolyn *had some little ground of* complaint!" said the lady, with her little, low, half dignified, half jolly langh.

"This from *you*, mother!" exclaimed Archer Clifton, reproachfully. "I thought you knew me better. You *do* know me better! But I must have some hand in this girl's good fortune."

Mrs. Clifton, who was walking about the room, quietly setting things in order for the night, made no reply, but only smiled. And soon after she lighted a night-lamp, and placing it in the hand of her son, bade him good-night, and retired to her chamber. Captain Clifton remained pacing up and down the room, in troubled thought, some time after she had left, before seeking his own couch.

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CHAPTER VIII.

LOST AFFECTION.

"Oh! cast not thou
Affection from thee! In this bitter world
Hold to thy heart that only treasure fast;
Watch—guard it—suffer not a breath to dim
That bright gem's purity."—MRS. HEMANS.

MORNING came at length. Carolyn Clifton arose unrefreshed, weak, dizzy and sick. This was the first night's rest she had ever lost in her life. And on looking in the glass—habitually the first thing the beauty ever did after rising—she was shocked to see what havoc one night's evil passions had made in her appearance. What a fright she had become! How pale her cheeks, how dragged the muscles, how red, dim, and sunken her eyes! And this upon her wedding-day—and when she had a quarrel to make up with her intended husband, too! When, in fine, every circumstance pressingly demanded that she should appear in the highest beauty. Would Archer Clifton—would that fastidious, artistic worshipper of the beautiful—feel inclined to a reconciliation with such a spectre as herself she mentally inquired, as she gazed wonderingly, deploringly, upon her haggard face? Carolyn was vain and proud and scornful—*so* vain and proud and scornful that she did not know—could not imagine that that very haggard face—haggard with sorrow for the estrangement and the separation, would be a stronger appeal, make a deeper impression upon the heart of her lover, than all the glory of her beauty had ever done. And thus vanity, pride and scorn punish their subject, not only by depriving her of very much respect and affection she would otherwise have, but by making her insensible of that love and esteem that really does surround her.

Carolyn at length rang for her woman. And after some little delay she came in, evidently just aroused up out of her sleep, and wondering that her young mistress should summon her before sunrise. But as soon as she saw her lady, her wonder gave way to alarm, and she exclaimed—

"My good gracious alive, Miss Carolyn! What's der matter, honey?"

"Has——*any one* arrived this morning, Aunt Darky?" inquired Miss Clifton, without noticing the old woman's alarm.

"No, chile, sure not! Who should ribe at dis onlikely hour ob de mornin? Ledst it war de doctor. Has you sent for de doctor, honey? But Lord, indeed, chile, you better lay down agin. Don't keep on standin' dere holdin' up your hair, weak as you looks, an' I'll run an' see!"

"Aunt Darky, I am not ill. I have had a bad night's rest—that's all. Go—and—"

"A bad night's res', an' like enough, honey! I had a *berry* bad night's res' de night afore me an' Old Nick took up 'long

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o' each oder! 'Deed chile, I was sort o' scared an' sorter happy, 'cause I *was* scared! An' deed, chile, 'tween so many con*try*dictions, I could'n onderstan' myself and kept awake all night! Lord, honey, it's nat'ral! We's all alike, 'cept 'tis de collor, an' dat's only outside show, skin deep. But bless you, honey, that wan't nothin' to the night resses I'se lost since dat, with long o' cryin' babies an' teethin' babies, an' sick chillun, an' ole man Nick comin' home drunk ebery time ole Marse give him any holyday money to spen' on hisself! Now praise be de Lor', de chillun's all raise' an' married an' settle' off, an' I'm a free 'oman! An' I tell my galls how I ain' gwine be bother' long o' *der* chillun, now in my ole days!"

"Aunt Darky," said Miss Clifton, feeling in no way flattered by the parallel, "go and get my bath ready, and have a cup of strong coffee brought the instant I leave it."

"Yes, honey—an' hadn't de baff's water better have de air tuk off o' it, as you'se not so strong dis mornin'?"

"Yes, yes—what makes you trouble me by questions? You ought to know what is proper to be done."

"An' so I allus does know, honey—only when I does my mos' properess', you doesn'n alluz' see it into dat light, an' you fines fau'rt long o' me," said the old body, as she left the room.

When Miss Clifton had left her warm bath, and had partaken of the rich strong coffee—strong as the essence of coffee, and made rich and thick by being half cream and sugar, and brought to her in a tiny porcelain cup, she felt sufficiently refreshed to be able, with the assistance of her woman, to make her morning toilet.

When she had finished dressing it was still very early, and two hours remained before breakfast—but she left her room, and met her father, who was an early riser, in the upper hall.

He came forward and kissed her. Then held both her hands, and looked in her face, exclaiming—"What, pale, my child? Oh, tut! tut! tut! tut! tut! That's *all* wrong! All wrong!"

"Father! has he come yet?"

"No, no—it's quite early yet! He'll be here anon! You should not have risen these two hours!"

"Father, I could not sleep! I could not even lie in bed!"

"Oh, pooh! pooh! pooh! All folly! All nonsense! Go back and rest."

"Father, I cannot! My words to him were so wrong! so bitter! so insulting! I feel them to have been such, and I can never rest until I have told him so!" said Carolyn, dropping her head upon the only bosom to which her haughty heart could bear to confide its sorrow and its repentance.

"Well, so you were wrong, very wrong! It will teach you a lesson that will benefit you for the future. And for the present it will blow over. There, there, there—if you can't be still, go and amuse yourself by making me a nice mint-

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julep! I want it before I go out in the fields—the morning air on my empty stomach isn't good for me."

He then kissed Carolyn and let her go. As she left him, he saw to his surprise Frank Fairfax emerge from his chamber, with a portmanteau in his hand. Frank immediately set it down, and advancing, said—

"Ah, sir! I was just about to seek you, to let you know that, to my infinite regret, I must leave you to-day."

"To-day? You astound me! What is up now? You mustn't go—you shan't!"

"Sir, I have received an order to join my regiment without delay."

"Oh-h-h, that's bad! That's bad! Devil fly away with military life! That's what was always hiking away Archer at the very time I wanted him most. But no frantic hurry! You needn't go to-day! You *mustn't*. Why, this is the wedding-day, you rascal!"

"I know it, sir! But, to my everlasting regret, I must forego the pleasure of being present upon that occasion. My order is a peremptory one, to join my regiment instantly."

"Well, well. To-morrow'll do! To-morrow'll do! *One* day cannot make so much difference."

"My dear sir, I surely need not tell you that soldiers should be 'minute men' in their obedience. Besides, if I do not seize the opportunity of meeting the Staunton stage as it passes through L—— to-night, I shall have to wait three days for the next stage. So, you see—"

"Yes, yes; I see! I am always called upon to see something I don't want to see! Ah! here comes the mint-julep! Did Miss Carolyn mix it?"

This was addressed to a colored boy who brought a pint tumbler on a little waiter.

"Yez, zur," said the boy.

"Do you take julep in the morning, Frank? Try this. Another julep for me, Nace!"

"No, no, I thank you, sir! I never do. I wish you good-morning till breakfast-time," said Frank, taking up his portmanteau, and going down stairs.

Frank put his little burden down in the lower hall, and went into the summer saloon, where he was sure, by the precedent of the last thirty days, of finding Zuleime at the window, doing her sampler-work. Yes, there she was, in her white muslin and coral, with her jet black hair and damask cheeks! He went and sat down by her, (after saying "Good-morning,") and sat for some minutes in perfect silence, watching Zuleime work the word LOVE, in crimson silk. At length—

"Whom do *you* love best in the world, Zuleime," he asked.

"How can you ask? Whom does *everybody* love best?—'her nain sel,' as the Welshman said, of course!" exclaimed the merry maiden.

"Humph! Well, whom do you love the *next* best to yourself?"

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"Why, let me see," said the girl, pausing thoughtfully, with her needle poised in her hand; "I think, that next to myself, I love—Zuleime Clifton best of all the world!"

"I thought so! And I can lay my hand upon my heart, and say, that you don't love Zuleime Clifton a whit better than I do!—no, nor half so well! I'll throw down my gage on that, and fight it out to extremity! Come!—What have you to say to that?" asked the young man, with all the earnestness in his face and manner that his light words wanted—"say, speak! What do you say to that?"

"Why, that you are as foolish as Zuleime herself, in loving such a little, out-of-the-way baggage, that is neither woman nor child, nor good nor bad, nor any thing else in particular."

"Well, at any rate, we both agree in loving and worshiping Zuleime, however we may differ in our opinion of her—*I*, for instance, thinking her a beautiful, joyous, delightful girl. So, it's settled, isn't it?"

"What is settled?"

"Oh, you know, you tease!"

"I know the weather is settled, if you mean *that*?"

"Pooh!"

"I *don't* know that the naval trouble with Great Britian is settled, if you mean *that*!"

"Pooh, pooh!"

"I know that the marriage dower of thirty thousand dollars is settled upon Carolyn, if you mean that!"

"Pooh, pooh, pooh!"

"Well, I shall not try to guess again, lest you should say, 'Pooh, pooh, pooh, *pooh!*'—four times!"

"Zuleime!" said the young man, earnestly, "I think without presumption, I may say that I know your disposition towards me. Zuleime, I wish that we should pass all our lives together, side by side! I would like to open my heart and bid you look into it and read for yourself. I hate to say, 'I love you,' (though if you could look into my heart!) Oh, that phrase, 'I love you,' Zuleime, is so fallen, is so prostituted, so degraded from its high meaning—'I love you' so often means 'I need your wealth,' 'need your family influence,' 'I desire your delightful beauty!' Oh, Zuleime dearest girl, how then shall I express my true, sincere, earnest devotion to you?"

"You needn't—I know you like me, Frank," murmured Zuleime, very low. And then she added, lower still—"But I am nothing but a wild school girl, and, seriously, I fear it isn't right for me to listen to such words for years to come yet. And I fear father might not like it, only that he likes *you* so very well."

And Zuleime bent over her sampler, diligently, commencing the next word, HOPE, in azure silk.

"I know it, Zuleime! Dear, candid girl, I know it all—

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all the seeming error! But, Zuleime, I am going away to-day," (she looked up in surprise,) "and I may be gone for several years. When I come back I shall certainly return a captain, if not probably a major, or possibly a colonel. Before I go, I wish to have a fair understanding with yourself and your father, that I may go away with some feeling of security. I want you both to promise that when I return you will give me your hand."

"You may speak to father, Frank. But I tell you frankly now, what I wish you had heard before. It is this:—that I have been promised to my grim cousin, Major Cabell, ever since I can remember anything. And till you came, I have always, whenever I have anticipated the future at all, looked forward to being his hum-drum wife, and living in a grim three-story red brick, in a row, and opposite another row of stiff, prison-like red brick houses, each one of which, taken singly, is more dreary than all the rest. I didn't like the prospect, Frank; but I thought it was my fate, and the best father could do for me, and so I thought of no other possibility but the grim red brick house in the city and Major Cabell. Besides, father is so good a father, and so fond and indulgent, that it seemed *too* wicked to think of disappointing his gentle wishes, that never take the form of commands. And so, Frank, although whenever I would think of the grim brick house, with tall dark chambers, and the narrow, stony, distracting street before it, and Major Cabell, my heart would sink very heavy, and I would think, young as I was, that there was scarcely any hope for me at all—yet, I would recollect my dear good father wished it, and I would pluck up my spirits and feel blithe as a bird again. It was all understood at the school where I am getting finished, as they call it. And father left word that Major Cabell should be admitted to visit me. So when I am there he comes to visit me frequently, and takes me out riding, or driving, and to concerts. And the girls whisper together, and say that I am engaged—"

"Stop—stop—stop—stop! Pardon me, Zuleime! Pardon me, dear girl! But, I am giddy—indeed, I am ill! Have you yourself promised to marry him?"

"No, surely not; and that is the reason why I consider myself in some sort *free*—but of my duty to my good father. No, he has never even asked me. He considers my father's promise quite sufficient, and our marriage quite a matter of course. And so I used to consider it, too. These things are often done, Frank. These betrothals, I mean. Any one might suppose the custom obsolete—having died in dark ages. It is not. It prevails here to a considerable extent. It is done to keep family property together, or family interest closely cemented. And, Frank, he has never courted me yet. You see he considers me a child still. And so I am, compared to him, in years. And so I should be, in all things,

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a child, but that the shadow of that grim brick house is always falling on my heart!"

"And yet, with all this, you are a very, very merry maiden!"

"Yes, so I am. I try to be! I keep a din up in my head to prevent me hearing what my heart wants to say! Goodness! I can do nothing for the poor thing, you know, and what's the use of stopping to listen to its cry?—*that* would only encourage it to complain the more. Don't look so sorry, Frank! It is not all effort! It could not be, you know. I'm naturally of a glad, elastic temper; and but for this drawback, Heaven knows what I should be! the wildest, maddest, most harem-scarem, most heels-over-head, skip-over-the-moon madcap that ever turned a quiet home topsy-turvy, and drove a quiet family to distraction! The Bible says,—'God loveth whom He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son (and daughter) whom He receiveth.' Then I think, (I *do* think, sometimes, young and volatile as I am,) I think that every one whom God redeems, has *some* sorrow, and that that sorrow is always the precise one fitted to cure their besetting sin! As the proud are still kept down by poverty and oppression, the vain lose their charms, or the power of enhancing them, etc., etc., etc., among all the erring whom God designs to set right. And I, who am naturally so wild and thoughtless, must be sobered and made thoughtful by the prospect of that prison before me!"

"Zuleime, does this man love you?"

"Frank, if I say he does not *hate* me, it is the extent of all favorable things I can say about the state of his mind towards me. No, he does not love me. It is entirely a betrothal of convenience. Sometimes I look forward to my future life in that great unknown city, which I should dislike under any circumstances, and especially to pass my whole life in, with one I do not like, and who does not like me, and I *wonder* how I shall contrive to exist,—*I*, who love to be in the country, on this dear old homestead, with my fond old father and my tender old nurse, and the colored folks who love me so well,—and where I have so many occupations,—and, oh, my soul and body! I think how *shall* I ever put life through in that packed up city! Sometimes I think—for I *must* have something to occupy my whole soul with—that I will be very gay and worldly, and dress, and visit, and give balls, and go to balls, and theatres; but then again I reflect that it would be wicked to spend all one's time and attention upon such things. And then I think I shall try to grow serious enough to join a church, and that I will be a leading member, and a Sunday School teacher, and a patroness of the Bible Society, and of the Missionary Society, and a getter-up of new kinds of benevolent associations, and Dorcas circles, and be a Committee woman, and a distributor of tracts, and a collector of subscriptions, etc. One *must* do *something* to

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fill up the long, long days; one *must* live *somehow*, and, upon the whole, I thought this latter plan might do, as it would occupy me entirely, and is not so wicked as the other."

"Ah, I don't know that, Zuleime! But, my dearest girl, cease all these troubled thoughts about the future, unnatural to your age, and unwholesome to yourself! This whole cloud must be swept away like a cobweb. He doesn't love you. You don't love him. He has never asked you to marry him. You have never promised to do so. It is a mere betrothal of convenience, made by the parents of both for the purpose of keeping family property together, and cementing family interests. Oh, it is all wrong! And there is nothing in it. I will speak to your father. I will enter the lists with this Major Cabell, as a competitor for your hand. In all worldly circumstances, which are ever of the greatest value in a Clifton's estimation—in family, wealth and social position, I am his peer. Besides, I wear my lady's favor, which he does not! I will go to your father now and tell him as much, shall I, Zuleime?"

The young lady was busy threading her needle with golden yellow silk, and did not answer. He repeated the question.

"Yes," murmured Zuleime, beginning to embroider the last word of the trio,—FAITH,—in sunbeam silk. No time was to be lost. He raised his hand to his lips, and darted out upon the lawn to meet old Mr. Clifton, whom he saw approaching the house.

"My dear sir!" exclaimed Mr. Fairfax, rather excitedly, "I have something of the utmost importance to say to you! Will you take a turn with me?"

"My dear sir!" repeated the old gentleman, smiling, "breakfast is ready! Let's go on to the house!"

"But my *dear* sir! my business is urgent!"

"My *very* dear sir! the coffee is getting cold!" said the old man, laughing at Frank's excitement.

"Mr. Clifton," said the young man, gravely and sadly, "immediately after breakfast I must leave here. This, then, is the only opportunity I have or shall have of communicating to you what is on my heart to say—and it really *is* on my *heart*."

"Say on then, my dear boy! say on!" exclaimed the benevolent old gentleman. But Frank, now that he had got leave to speak, was struck dumb. He thought it was perfectly easy and simple to ask for Zuleime, but now the request, like Macbeth's amen, stuck in his throat. "Come," said the old gentleman, running his fat arm through Frank's slender one, "give me the support of your arm, for I am not so young and active as you are, and let us take a little walk up the path towards Hardbargain. Perhaps we may meet Archer, and bring him back with us to breakfast. He is not at the *house*, is he?"

"No, sir," said Frank, glad to recover the use of his tongue.

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"We expect him here to breakfast. We shall probably meet him. Come! Well, now! what is it?" he asked, as they turned their backs on the house.

Frank had plucked up his courage, and now spoke to the purpose.

"Mr. Clifton, as I am going away immediately after breakfast, and as I am to be absent for an indefinite length of time, I wish before I leave to tell you that which lies upon my heart—" here he paused a little time to collect his thoughts and fine words, while the old gentleman attended with an encouraging expression of countenance. Frank resumed—"Mr. Clifton, I love your daughter Zuleime. And I have come to beg your sanction to our engagement!" As the old man only said, "Whew-w-w-w!" Frank continued—"You know my rank in the army, and my prospect of promotion. You are acquainted with my family, and are aware of their interest and influence in the country. Allow me farther to add, that my own private fortune amounts to fifty thousand dollars. And I will settle thirty thousand on my bride. Besides which—"

"Stay, stay—my *dear* fellow, stay!" interrupted the old man, with a troubled look. "This is all nonsense, now! Zuleime is a child. And you have not known her more than six weeks. Love Zuleime! Pooh, pooh! You young men are so flighty and fickle in your fancies! You get frantic about every new face you see, and think yourselves in love! Pooh, pooh! Now, Frank, my boy, come! let's hear no more of it! It's all nonsense! You young officers are always in love, or fancying yourselves so! I dare say, you have been in love with all the daughters of all your commanders, and Heaven forefend, a little platonically smitten with all their wives, too! Come, I know you! Nonsense! Let's hear no more of it!"

"Mr. Clifton, I am no trifler in matters of the affections I never *have* been. I never *shall* be, I hope! And when I tell you, upon my sacred honor, that never in my life have I 'flirted,' as it is called, with a woman—that never in my life have I either loved or addressed the language of love to a woman—except Zuleime—you will believe me!"

"*Oh-h-h-h!*" exclaimed the old gentleman, with an exceedingly bored look. "It's all *folly*, all *nonsense*, I tell you! A sudden fancy! Nothing more! Let's drop the subject."

"Mr. Clifton," said the young man, gravely and sorrowfully, for he saw that the old gentleman rather evaded than denied or accepted his suit, "I have never, in my whole life, been addicted to taking sudden and evanescent fancies, as you might judge, from what I told you! And when I tell you that I love your daughter Zuleime, I mean that I love her sincerely and earnestly, with my whole heart and soul—and that I shall love her to the last hour of my life!"

"Bah! bah! It's all *tom-foolery*, I tell you! You get

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yourself shut up in a country house with a pretty girl, and *of course* you fall in love with her! *To be sure!* What else could you do? It's expected of you! You'd disappoint us if you didn't! But it is such love as will not outlast your journey to your regiment."

"It will outlast my life! I know it will! I feel it will?" said Frank, earnestly, vehemently.

"Tah! tah! tah!—you'll fall desperately in love with the first pretty squaw of the friendly tribes who shall come to bring moccasins to your frontier fort!"

"Oh, God!" groaned the young man, bitterly, dropping his face into his hands. "There is no way of making a serious impression upon you, and I am going away in two hours!" His tone and manner so affected the really impressible and benevolent old gentleman, that he half embraced him with his fat arm, saying—

"Now *don't*, Frank! *Do* be a good boy! *Don't! Do!* It's all *folly* now! *Indeed* it is! *Do! Don't!* Now consider—how many pretty girls there are in the world! *Don't*, Frank! A great deal prettier than my girl. Never fret about her. *Do*, Frank. Besides, she's so young! A mere schoolgirl. Only fifteen last Monday. Pooh, pooh! Not to be thought of, you know! Far too young!"

"Sir, I can wait. I only wish your sanction to our engagement. I can wait three or four years, if necessary, or any length of time at all, if I may hope to get her at last!"

"She is too *young*, I tell you, Frank! Too young to know her own mind. Only fifteen. Ridiculous!"

"But, sir, I have heard of gentlemen older and more settled than myself who have actually *married* girls of fifteen. *I* only ask an engagement!"

"You mean *me*, you dog! I know you do! I see you do! But, Frank, seriously and solemnly, I would'nt do so again! And for that very reason that *I* committed that egregious folly, that bitter wrong against a young girl, I will not suffer any one else to do the same wrong to my child, if I can help it!"

"No, Mr. Clifton—pardon me, but are *you* not about to commit a more grevious wrong to your own lovely, gentle child? Have you not? Pardon me! Pardon me! But *have* you not promised her hand where she cannot give her heart?"

"No! Heaven forbid! I promised her to Charley Cabell. She used to like him very well. I did the best I could for her happiness. I have secured it—unless—unless—oh, my God, Frank!" suddenly exclaimed the old man, in his turn extremely agitated, and wiping the prespiration from his brow, "I *hope*—I *trust in God* you haven't entrapped her affections! Frank! Frank! She *is* engaged to Major Cabell! I didn't tell you so when you first asked me for her, because—because-for many reasons—" (wiping the streaming perspiration from his brow) "it is—it is—disagreeable to remember and talk about it! But—but—she *is* engaged to

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Major Cabell, and—and for many reasons—family reasons—it is necessary that the engagement should be fulfilled! Unless—unless—some inevitable, *insurmountable obstacle*, was to arise and prevent it! Frank! Frank! I am in a great strait! a dire, doleful strait! but—but—sooner than make my girl *un*happy, or stand in the way of her perfect happiness, I would—I would—I would *die in a jail!* Where I may die! Where I may die!" Nothing could exceed the force of the emotion that agitated the old man, shaking his huge form, and choking up his utterance.

Mr. Fairfax looked at him with mingled astonishment, wonder and compassion.

"Boy—boy—you *haven't* entrapped my dear child's heart?" again inquired the old gentleman, trembling with excess of feeling.

"*Entrapped* is not exactly the word, sir," said Frank, proudly and mournfully. "I learned to love her, and I won her love without designing to do either."

"Lost! Lost!" cried Mr. Clifton, dropping his head upon his bosom. He walked on in silence so desponding, that Fairfax could not bring himself to intrude upon it. They went on until they suddenly met *Major Cabell himself* coming down the hill, apparently from Hardbargain.

The Major was walking slowly, with his head down, and twirling around his finger a topaz necklace. As soon as he perceived Messrs. Clifton and Fairfax, his forehead flushed, and he hastily thrust the necklace into his vest pocket. Frank thought the whole thing strange, but, but stranger still was the conduct—the metamorphosis—the transfiguration of Mr. Clifton, who, upon observing the Major, instantly put a violent constraint upon himself, and became the broad-faced, rosy, smiling, blue-eyed debonnair old gentleman, so lavish in the display of his fine teeth, and hearty, cordial words and smiles. Frank was provoked that their conversation was so completely arrested.

"Ah, good-morning," said Mr. Clifton, addressing the Major. "Been to Hardbargain this morning so early? How are all the folks up there? See Archer? Why didn't he walk with you? Eh? Expected him!"

"I have not been to Hardbargain, sir," replied the Major, rather morosely.

"Been out taking a morning stroll then, eh? Fine appetite for breakfast, no doubt. And it is waiting for us too. Come, Frank, let us turn about."

They did so. Frank now noticed for the first time that the manner of the old gentleman was conciliating, while that of the Major was surly.

They soon reached the house, and the breakfast-room, where the ladies were awaiting their arrival.

As they entered, the countenance of Carolyn Clifton was flushed and eager. But when they had all got in, and were

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seated at the table, the colour died out of her face, leaving her pale as marble. She merely trifled with her breakfast, pretending to eat, but no morsel passed her lips. When breakfast was over, and the company dispersed about the room, Carolyn almost reeled past her father in going out, and muttered with pale lips—"Father! Not come yet?"

"Never mind! Never mind, my dear! I will ride up to Hardbargan, and fetch him."

"Not for the universe, father! if he never comes!" replied the determined girl, plucking up her spirit, and sweeping proudly past and going into the piazza, where she sat, by-the-bye, with her eyes strained up the mountain-path by which he ought to come.

Frank got no opportunity of speaking alone with Zuleime. Old Mr. Clifton met him, however, when he came in from looking after his horse, and said, kindly patting him on the shoulder—"Indeed, my dear boy, I don't see the least necessity for your leaving us until after dinner. The stage coach doesn't pass through L——— till eight o'clock at night, and five or six hours is ample time in which to reach there."

"Yes, sir! I grant it, but I have to go this morning to Hardbargain to take leave of Mrs. Clifton, and of my friend Archer, if, indeed, the latter is not ordered on the same duty as myself, which, upon Miss Clifton's account, I am inclined to fear."

"Oh! Are you going to ride to Hardbargain? Then, perhaps, you will be pleased to learn that Zuleime is going there this morning, also, to assist Mrs. Clifton in putting the last finishing touches to her dress for this evening. And you can escort her!" said Georgia, smoothly gliding between them, and laying her head and hand with childlike freedom and affection upon the old man's shoulder.

"Oh! I shall be very happy!" said Frank, "*really* happy—nay, *overjoyed*, *intoxicated*, with the prospect of an uninterrupted, farewell *tête-à-tête* with Zuleime."

Old Mr. Clifton looked rather disappointed, but he was not of a very combative disposition—especially had he no inclination to contradict Georgia. Besides, he at once reflected that there was really no danger. They couldn't be married in the neighborhood, because they could get no license, and no clergyman dare marry them without one. And it was not probable, or even possible, that Frank would elope with his daughter on the very eve of joining his regiment for a distant and dangerous service. In truth, he felt it was folly to cherish a misgiving. And yet he had misgivings, nor could he banish them—the utmost extent of his self-control was—not to *act* upon them—not to forbid their riding together. While Zuleime was putting on her hat and riding habit, Frank got the ear of the old gentleman once more, and for the last time. The old man had sunk into his broad-bottomed flag chair in the hall, with his thick gold-headed stick between his knees,

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and his two hands and his chin resting upon it, when Frank stood before him with folded arms and head dropped upon his breast, and said—

"Mr. Clifton—once more, and for the last time, I ask you and I implore you to answer me candidly. Is there any possibility that, under any change of circumstances, at any future time, I may hope for your consent to my union with Zuleime?"

The earnestness, deepening almost into solemnity, of the young man's manner and words, impressed Mr. Clifton very deeply, but he replied—"Mr. Fairfax, it is best to speak the plain, harsh, cutting truth, though that truth is the axe laid to the root of all your hopes of Zuleime. No. Yet I regret this, Frank! You do not know how much! But you must forget her! I hope you will *soon* do so! I know you *must!*"

Frank shook his head in despairing negation. And farther colloquy was arrested by the coming down of Zuleime equipped for her ride.

"Come here, my daughter! Now you must be *sure* to be back by dinner time, do you hear?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"*Promise* me."

"Of course I do.

"Upon your *honor!*" said the old man, seriously.

"Upon my honor, sir, I will return by dinner time! But what makes you so empathic about it, dear father?"

"A notion of mine, my child! but I have your promise!"

"Of course you have, sir!" said Zuleime, drawing on her gloves.

Mr. Fairfax was taking leave of Mrs. Clifton. Presently he turned to bid adieu to Mr. Clifton.

The old gentleman shook his hand warmly, wishing him all the success he desired, and affecting to laugh and jest, while he exacted a like promise from Fairfax, namely, that he should take his girl to Hardbargain, and leave her there to return by dinner time.

Frank gave his word very cheerfully. The young couple then mounted and rode away. The old man watched them from the piazza in sorrowful love, murmuring—

"God bless them. I wish they *could* be married. Poor things. If they *do* love each other so much, or if they *think* they do, which is quite as bad while it lasts—why, it is but kind to let them have this last little parting comfort of a ride together? And it was well to—" chuckled the old gentleman—"to tie them up with promises, so that they can't run away, which they might else be tempted to do in their parting hour. But they will neither of them ever break their word, and I shall have her back safe by dinner time. For it is utterly impossible for them to get married without a license, and it is quite impracticable to get a license this side of L———, or to ride to L——— between this and noon,

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much less to ride thither and return here in time for dinner! Ah! I have them there! And yet, I am sorry for them, too! Poor things!"

All this time Carolyn Clifton had sat like one dead, only with her eyes strained up the mountain bridal-path.

In the meantime, Frank and Zuleime pursued their ride. As soon as they were out of sight and hearing of a band of field laborers, employed in cutting grass, and had entered the shady mountain path, Frank said—

"Well, Zuleime, my dearest girl, I spoke to your father—"

—"And his answer—I almost dread to hear it—yet I know what it was, too."

Frank nodded his head, and they rode on in silence for some minutes, broken at last by Frank, who suddenly exclaimed—

"Zuleime! you bear this so well!"

"Frank, you know this is no new thing to me; I have known it, and been prepared for it all along!" replied the girl, with a look of resignation.

"Oh, Zuleime! is there no way to prevent it?"

"None that I know of, Frank!"

"Zuleime! I was in every way his equal—why, when that is the case, and when I was supported by your voice, too—*why* was I rejected?"

The maiden shook her head.

"Zuleime, when is this hideous marriage expected to come off—do you know?"

"Whenever Major Cabell chooses to demand my hand, I believe!"

"Really! Upon my word! He is a personage of tremendous importance! Whenever HE chooses to demand your hand!! Zuleime! that is passing strange! This affair seems then to rest entirely on Major Cabell!!!"

"Yes, it does entirely."

"Bless his Majesty. Zuleime, *what hold has that man on your father?*"

Zuleime shook her black ringlets mournfully, but did not reply.

"Do you know, my dear girl, that I am impressed with the idea that your father does not at heart wish to give you to Major Cabell, but rather yields to a strange power the man holds over him?"

"At times I have thought so, too. But then my dear father at other times really seems so set upon the marriage, that the thought has been driven out of my head again! I do not know what to think! But what I *do* know is, that I will never willingly do anything to give my dear father pain!"

"My dearest girl, do you know that I believe, from my soul, that your marriage with Major Cabell will give your father more pain than any other circumstance could?"

The young girl looked up in surprise.

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"Zuleime! he told me to-day, that though he had promised you to Major Cabell, he would rather die than see you *unhappy*, or stand in the way of your *perfect* happiness!"

"My dear father! My dear, gentle father! My fond old father!" exclaimed Zuleime, with the bright tears rolling on her damask cheeks, like dew on the red rose. "My kind generous father! He shall never know that I am unhappy! And neither *shall* I be unhappy when pleasing him!"

"My dear, excellent girl! listen to me! You shall not be unhappy any way! Do you suppose, Zuleime, that I could ride by your side so cheerfully, if I thought you were going to marry that man, on whom your father no more wishes to bestow you, than he wishes to send you to perdition? Listen, my darling girl! When your father told me what I have repeated to you, he went on to say, that for certain *family* reasons, it was incumbent on him to fulfil his promise, and to bestow your hand upon Major Cabell, *unless some insurmountable obstacle should interpose to arrest the union!* Zuleime! a flood of light broke on me then! and I felt and knew that the old man would yield his darling daughter to the mysterious power exercised over him by Major Cabell, rather than bestow her with esteem and affection! Zuleime! without vanity, I think that he loves me better, and would prefer me for a son-in-law, if he were free to choose. I think, indeed I do, that he would hail with secret joy "an insurmountable obstacle," which would prevent the marriage, and not implicate him in any manner. I think that was what he meant when he said what he did. Still, I am convinced that the words slipped from him unintentionally. I am certain he did not mean to give me the hint, which nevertheless, I take, for he is a man of strict honor, I know, and would never tamper with the *spirit* of a promise any more than he would break the *words!*"

"Oh! no, he never would, indeed!"

"And again, my dearest girl, when I asked him just before we came away, whether, at any future time, under any possible contingency, I might hope to obtain his consent to our union, he assured me that I might not, and earnestly entreated me to forget you! That further convinced me that he had no design in giving me the hint upon which I am about to act—do you hear me, dearest Zuleime?"

Zuleime did not, or at least did not appear to.

"Zuleime, my darling, my love," said Frank, dismounting in the path, and lifting her from her saddle. "I am about to raise 'an insurmountable obstacle' to your marriage with the Major!"

Zuleime turned deadly pale with surprise and terror, and glanced wildly around, while she fell upon his arm and seemed about to faint.

"Why, Zuleime! Come, come. What is the matter? Don't be afraid! What, afraid of *me*, of *Frank*, your playmate?

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Why, look up in my face and see! Come, lift up your head? I want to talk to you! There! there! Why, what are you afraid of? I will take *no* step without your consent, sweet Zuleime!"

The infinite tenderness of his words, tones and manner, reassured the frightened girl, and she raised her face, now suffused with blushes. He supported her with his arm around her waist, while he pointed down into a narrow glen to the right, and said—

"There! Look there, Zuleime. Do you see that little stone house—there in the bottom of the glen—there by the spring—but so much like the rocks, near it, and so deep in the shade, as hardly to be distinguishable! Do you see it?"

"Yes," breathed the maiden, very low

"Do you know who lives there?"

"No."

"A good old man! A saintly old man! A poor Baptist missionary preacher, who lives in that hut quite alone, and *preaches* there every Sunday to an humble congregation, composed of poor mountaineers and negroes. He has devoted his life to labor among the mountain people, and has done wonders in reforming them! Is it possible that *you*, living in the neighborhood, knew nothing of him?"

"Oh, yes! I have heard a great deal about Mr. Saunders, only I did not know where exactly his hut was. There are so many of them, you know!" said the girl, somewhat recovered, and much interested.

"My dearest Zuleime! we will go down to that hut! 'I see by the smoke, that so gracefully curls,' that the old man is at home. We will tell him the whole story, as far as we know it, and get him to raise that required insurmountable obstacle!"

"Oh! Frank!" exclaimed Zuleime, shocked, delighted, terrified, overjoyed.

"But, my dearest Zuleime! my dearest love! I have recorded an oath in Heaven, to save you from that marriage with Cabell! And I will never leave you until you are my wife. If you refuse NOW, I will throw up my commission in the army, and live there in that hut with the old parson, until you *do* consent!"

"But, my father, Frank! My dear father!"

"Dearest girl, he will be glad!" Here Frank went over the whole story again, and added—"And Zuleime, have you no love, no pity left from your father to bestow upon the poor soldier who loves you so, and who is going out to the Indian frontier, where he may lose his scalp, or be burned alive, or eaten raw within a month by the red-skins? Will you refuse his last prayer?" etc., etc., etc. Over and over again, fervently, earnestly, imploringly, despairingly he repeated the argument and the prayer, while he held the maiden "half willing, half afraid." "She who hesitates is lost," it is said.

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Zuleime hesitated a long time, and, consequently, was lost to all eternity. What could she oppose, indeed, to what seemed so right and reasonable? With a deep sigh she yielded at last. There was no path that way down into the glen, and the descent was deep and precipitous, and overgrown with stunted cedar, pine and thorn bushes. So, Romeo and Juliet began to clamber down, by foot-holds of jagged rocks, and fist-holds of thorn bushes, to the great risk of wounded hands and torn pants and petticoats. And so it was in rather a disordered state of attire, as well as in an excited state of mind, that they at last arrived before the door of Father Lawrence's cell, and rapped. While they waited for the old man to appear, Frank, very much to the surprise of Zuleime, drew from his vest pocket a license—a regular *bona fide* license, signed by the clerk of R ——— county, and sealed with the county seal. Resting his foot upon the door-step, he took off his hat, turned it down on his knee, laid the license upon its top, and drawing from his other pocket a travelling pen and ink case, proceeded to write the names of Francis Rutland Fairfax and Zuleime Dovilliers Clifton in the blank spaces.

"You look surprised, my dearest girl," said he, as he returned the pen and ink case to his pocket. "You wonder how I came by this license? I will tell you. I have it by a stroke of the rarest good fortune. You know, being groomsman, I was entrusted with the duty of riding to L———, and procuring the marriage license for Archer and your sister. Well! when I arrived at the clerk's office, by the strangest caprice of memory, I entirely forgot Miss Clifton's middle name, so I got the clerk to give me one license filled out with the names of Carolyn Clifton and Archer Clifton, and then knowing how extremely punctilious you all are here, in this county, I procured another license regularly signed and sealed, but leaving blank spaces for the proper names of the parties! There, darling! that is the manner in which I came by it! Now, this blank one I will fill up with our names, which I really think look quite as pretty as the others would! As for Clifton and your sister, if they want a license, they will have to put up with the first, which I will hand to Archer as soon as we get to Hardbargain. Bless my soul! what has become of that old man?" he exclaimed, rapping loudly, then trying the door and pushing it open. The house was empty. Frank looked dismally disappointed, but Zuleime plucked him by the sleeve, and whispered hurriedly—

"Here he comes—behind you!"

And he turned to see the old preacher coming from the spring, bending under the light weight of a small pail of water. Frank immediately went to him, greeted him respectfully, and took from his hand the pail, and carrying it, walked by his side, till they reached the house. Lieutenant Fairfax then introduced himself by name and station, and pre-

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sented Miss Zuleime Clifton. The old man bowed and offered his hand, with a courtly grace, in strange contrast to his rude garb and rough habitation. He invited them to come in and sit down. And when they had entered, and Zuleime was seated, Frank took the old man aside, communicated the object of their call, and produced his license. The old man glanced from the earnest countenance of Frank to the blushing, downcast face of Zuleime, shook his bald head, and looked very grave.

Frank drew him off to the farthest corner of the little hut, made him sit down on the foot of his bed, seated himself by his side, and in a fervid, earnest, eloquent manner, told him their little story.

Many times the old man shook his thin, gray locks. They were not good things—these secret marriages—they never prospered. Marriage should be open as day—with the blessing of God—with the blessing of parents—with the sympathy of friends—with the good wishes of acquaintances to hallow and prosper the union.

"Oh!" said Frank, but this was an extraordinary occasion, the father was really at heart not opposed to this marriage, but circumstances compelled him to withhold his open consent—he himself, (Frank), was about to depart on a long journey, and merely wished to secure his bride against a forced marriage of convenience during his absence. In short, Frank recommenced the argument, and told it all over from beginning to end.

Still the old man shook his bald head and demurred.

Frank began the story over again, recited the whole of it, with many additions and improvements.

To no purpose—the old man was obdurate. Frank, then, half angrily, arose, and said—

"Come Zuleime! We must go on to the frontier together, and find somebody to marry us on the route, and let Mr. Saunders here be responsible for all trouble that may ensue, since with the license before him, he refuses to unite us." At this, Zuleime burst into tears and wept heartily.

The old preacher dropped his head upon his breast in troubled thought for some moments, and, whether the arguments of Frank had after all produced some effect, or whether he feared to encounter the responsibility of sending this wild young couple on their way unmarried, or whether he was moved to pity by the tears of Zuleime, or whether, as is more probable, *all* these considerations actuated him, I know not; but he slowly rose to his feet, uncovered his head, and lifted up his eyes in silent prayer awhile, then bade the young pair stand up, for that he would marry them.

Frank clasped the hand of Zuleime, and led her forward. And in less than fifteen minutes more, by the magic of a few words, the youth and maiden were man and wife. And while Mrs. Fairfax, with trembling white fingers, was tying her

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hat, Mr. Fairfax would have emptied the whole contents of his purse in the minister's hands,—but, though that money might have supplied the poor old preacher with many necessaries for which he really suffered, and made him very comfortable for a long time, yet he turned away his head, and put it away from him, saying—

"No, young man, I cannot take your gold; I may have erred in what I have done, but I did not do it for money."

"But you always take a fee, do you not?"

"From others I do—not from you. It would not be blessed."

The boyish brow of Frank clouded and darkened, but it cleared again instantly as he turned towards his bride.

They were about to bid the old minister adieu, when he took a hand of each, and joining them again, held them in his own, while he said—

"Children, if this thoughtless act bring you into much trouble, in the long, weary years of trial and suffering that may result from it, reproach *me* for my share in the rash deed as much as you please, but,—" he paused and looked solemnly from one to the other—"never, as you value love, and fidelity, and peace,—never, as you value the favor of Heaven, never reproach each other with it! So may God forgive, and bless, and prosper you! Good-bye!"

The young bride and groom had bowed their heads during this benediction, and at its close responded with a silent heartfelt amen. They then left the cabin.

If the minister of God grievously erred in performing this secret marriage ceremony, he was soon called to account for it; the old man died that night.

As Mr. and Mrs. Fairfax left the cabin, they perceived Kate Kavanagh, on her little rough-coated mountain pony, coming straight down into the glen—her sure-footed little animal treading with perfect security the precipitous descent down which they had been obliged to clamber. Kate was looking very pale and care-worn, so that her ponderous abutting forehead, in its pallor, reminded Frank of a bare-bleached cliff. And, indeed, he thought that Kate's face looked more like that of an anxious politician, with the affairs of the nation on his shoulders, than of a grieved girl. But this was the fault of her marked features. But little time or thought had Mr. Fairfax to bestow upon the mountain-girl; so as soon as he caught sight of her, he turned in another direction, to avoid being recognized, saying—

"By all that's fatal, my dearest love, we were near being detected. And by all that's fortunate, we have escaped! Come this way, we will take a stroll down the glen and into the forest for a little while, until this girl is clear of the way."

"Oh, but it will delay us so much, I shall not have time to go to Hardbargain, and assist Aunt Clifton, and get back home to dinner, as I promised!"

"*My dear!*" said Frank, reproachfully, "do you grudge

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me these last few hours of your society, when we are about to be separated so far and so long? Besides, you know you are my own dear wife now. Will you refuse?"

"No, no, I cannot! But, oh, let me return to father—my dear, fond, confiding father,—as soon as I promised! Let me keep the word of promise to his ear, if I have broken it to his hope," cried Zuleime, bursting into a passion of tears.

Safe tears, and unobserved but by him who kissed them away, for already they had entered the thicket, and were veiled from the sight of Kate Kavanagh, who now dismounted before the door of the hut, and taking from the horns of the saddle a basket and a bundle, entered the poor preacher's humble habitation. We will turn from the erring pair and enter with her. None but God knew how much disinterested good the poor mountain-girl did in this world. Even the minister, who loved and respected her, knew little beyond the good she did for him. He knew that she knit new stockings and darned old ones for him—that she took his scanty clothing every week, and mended, and washed, and ironed it for him—and that when she brought it back, she would always bring him butter, cream and cheese of her own making, and a fresh loaf of rising bread of her own baking, and often some little rural luxury besides, as a jar of honey or a piece of venison. And that she would stay and clean up his house before she left. He knew that she was his good spirit.

As Kate entered the room, the old man came and met her, and took the basket and the bundle from her hands and set them down, and set a chair for her, and made her sit down in it, while he said—

"My dear child! my excellent child, you do too much for me! You hurt yourself, Catherine, and make me too deeply your debtor!"

Kate waved her hand in that quick, short way peculiar to herself, silently beseeching him to stop.

"But it is the truth, Catherine, my child! I shall never be able to repay you!"

"Oh, sir! you have reversed the case! It is *I* who am *your* debtor! If I were not *particularly* your debtor for all the education—mental, and moral, and religious, that I have ever received, up to the time of my coming to Hardbargain—still I should be *generally* your debtor, as youth is the general debtor of age—owing it all the service it can give." Then, to change the subject, the girl laid off her straw hat, drew off her sheep-skin home-made mittens, and arose and uncovered her basket saying—"Instead of a loaf of rising bread Mr. Saunders, I have brought you some fresh biscuits; I thought they might be an agreeable change. There is also a fresh print of butter, and a bottle of cream, and a beef's tongue, boiled—I thought the last would give you an appetite—I think you have not had a good appetite, lately!" And without more ado Catherine put the things away in the cupboard,

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setting the bottle of cream in a bowl of water, to keep cool and wishing to herself that she had a lump of ice to put on the old man's print of butter. Next, she unrolled the bundle, took the old man's nicely washed and mended clothes, and put them neatly away in the chest of drawers. Then she set the empty basket aside, rolled up her sleeves, stooped down upon the hearth, and began to make the fire, saying—"You know I have come to dine with you to-day, Mr. Saunders!"

"I know you have come to bring me many comforts, and to cook my dinner, and clean up my house, and make me very comfortable, you good girl, my dear little Brownie!"

Catherine moved about, in her quick and quiet way—filled and put on the kettle—for the old man would always have his cup of tea—and set the table, placing all the little rarities she had brought upon it. When all was ready, and they sat down, the old man found leisure to observe that Kate ate nothing, and looked pale and thoughtful.

"What is the matter, my dear Kate?—you who are *always* serious, are *now* positively sorrowful! What is it?"

Kate, who was truth itself whenever she spoke, chose for that reason to give no answer.

The old man looked more and more disturbed, and laying down his knife and fork, said—

"Nay, but Catherine, my dear child, there is something the matter! I do not wish to intrude on your confidence, but if you have any trouble that you think I may possibly be able to soothe—confide in me, as if I were your own father, my child."

"Dear Mr. Saunders, don't trouble your good heart about my cloudy face. Sure and hasn't a poor girl the same right to her smoke that a wealthy young lady has to her vapors?" said Kate, smiling.

The old minister did not press his question, but resumed his knife and fork with a look of mortification that worried Catherine, so that she said—

"I will tell you, then, what troubles me. My dearest, best friend and patron, Captain Clifton, has bidden me good-bye, and departed for the frontier! That is bad—oh, yes!—very bad. But that is not the worst. He has gone away very unhappy. I might as well tell you what everybody will soon know:—his marriage is broken off! He has gone away in anger with his promised bride. He has gone away so wretched! Mr. Saunders, when I saw him last night, looking so pale, and stern, and proud—and knew the haughtiness and the anguish of his heart, I thought I could have died to have restored peace and joy between him and her he loved so strongly."

"Merciful Heaven!—those Cliftons! This is another instance of their fatal subjection to passion! Do you know my dear child, what caused this quarrel?"

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"I know nothing but this—the marriage is broken off for the present! I do not know wherefore."

"Some jealous suspicion of one party or the other! Those Cliftons all have Spanish blood in them, and the Spanish character is uppermost in their nature. They are all haughty, reserved, jealous, suspicious."

"Ah, but they are full of courage, magnanimity and benevolence," said Catherine.

"Archer Clifton is of a very jealous and suspicious nature—was his betrothed inclined to coquetry?"

"Oh, I do not know, sir, but the misunderstanding did not originate in any charge against Miss Clifton. It was something of which Miss Clifton accused *him*, but of what, I do not know!—he did not say. My dear Mr. Saunders, I told you what troubled me, to satisfy your kind heart, and allay your benevolent anxiety on my account. And now please forgive me, for beseeching you not to question me farther upon the subject. They—the parties, I mean—are far removed above my sphere of thought and action—and the investigation of their motives of action, by me, seems to involve a certain indelicacy—I fear even impertinence of interference," said Catherine, gently.

"Yet, far above your sphere of thought and action as you say they are, they are not—at least *one* of them is not—above your sphere of sympathy and emotion. *His* sorrow affects *you* with sorrow!"

The blood rushed to Kate's brow, and she remained silent.

The old man and the maiden soon after arose from the table. She washed up the dishes, tidied up the house, and collected the poor preacher's soiled and broken clothes, and tied them in a bundle to take away with her to wash and mend. Then she tied on her hat, and took her leave of him; the old man calling her back, again and again, with vague prophetic meaning, to repeat over and over—"God bless you my child! God bless you!" It was his dying benediction.

A poor mountaineer, that called early the next morning to get the poor minister to the poor to come and bury his wife—found the old man dead.

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CHAPTER IX.

WOMAN'S PRIDE.

The bird when she pineth may hush her song
Till the hour when her heart shall again be strong;
But thou—canst thou turn in thy woe aside,
And weep midst thy sisters? No, not for pride.

May the fiery word from thy lip find way,
When the thoughts burning in thee shall spring to-day!
May the grief that sits in thy weary breast,
Look forth from thine aspect, the revel's guest?

No! with the shaft in thy bosom born,
Thou must hide the wound in thy fear of scorn!
Thou must fold thy mantle, that none may see,
And mask thee with laughter, and say thou art free!

MRS. HEMANS.

ALL the afternoon, Carolyn Clifton sat in the same place and in the same attitude in which we left her, affecting to read, but really watching the mountain-path with heart-sickening anxiety. Every distant sound of a horse's hoofs that struck upon her ear, sent an electric shock to her heart, causing her to start violently, tremble, and turn deadly sick and faint, with accelerated hope and fear, until its nearer approach revealed some neighbor going on his way, or some negro coming from the mill or the village, to her despairing sight. Even the sound of carriage wheels, as they occasionally rolled by, made her heart pause in its pulsations until it passed, and proved to be some family going on a visit or a shopping errand.—For still she hoped that if he did not come down the mountain-path on horseback he might come round the road with his mother in her carriage. He came not. And oh, the wedding day was almost over! No one saw the strife of hope and fear, like the struggle of life and death, going on silently in her bosom. Mrs. Georgia Clifton spent the whole forenoon in her own apartment, professing to be engaged with many elegant preparations for the evening; but really full of triumph for the success of her wicked scheming, and anxiety, and wonder for the events of the evening, and dark regret also for the absence of him who, if lost to Carolyn for ever, was lost to herself for a time at least. With all these passions and emotions striving in her bosom, she dared not show herself, lest her conscious heart and conscious face should betray her—for Georgia was yet young in wickedness.

The Misses Cabell were in their own chamber, putting a few finishing touches to their dresses for the evening, for they, with Zuleime, were to be the bridesmaids.

Zuleime herself had not yet returned, although it was near noon.

Old Mr. Clifton had been out, as was his daily habit of a forenoon, riding around his plantation.

He came in to-day a little earlier than usual, and finding his daughter exactly where he left her, but looking still more

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pale, haggard and anxious than in the morning, he sat down by her side, put his arm tenderly around her waist, and gazed lovingly into her whitened and sharpened countenance, before he said interrogatively—

"Not come yet, Carolyn?"

"No, sir!" answered the young lady, rising and putting off her father's caressing arm, and her own humiliating despondency, with a proud and queenly air.

"Well!" said the old man, with sudden energy, "I WILL certainly now ride up to Hardbargain and know the reason. DANDY!—my horse, there! Bring him back!—I've not done with him!"

"Father!" said Carolyn, seizing his hand, and detaining him, while she raised her head and looked and spoke in a manner that reminded him more strongly than ever of her arrogant mother, "Father, *no*, you will not go! No, no, father, if you have any love for *me*, any respect for the memory of my dead mother, *do not* subject her daughter and yours to such a mortification! No, father, if he *never* comes, never go after him!"

"You're a fool, girl!" cried the old man, breaking away from her, "a palpable fool!—You were a fool for quarrelling with him and sending him away, and now you are a greater fool for persisting in the quarrel. 'Mortification,' indeed! Who'll be the most mortified this evening, I wonder, 'if he never comes?' What the deuce are we to say to the people who will come here this evening to see you married? Tell me that?"

Before she could say another word, a large family carriage rolled down the road, and turned and entered the lawn.

Carolyn sank back in her seat, nearly swooning with the swift hope and fear that strove almost to agony as she gazed.

It looked so like Mrs. Clifton's carriage.

It was not, however. It contained the very earliest of the wedding guests, who, coming from a distance of thirty miles, had set out early enough to arrive in time to secure a whole afternoon's rest and refreshment before dressing for the evening. This was customary with those coming from afar.

Old Mr. Clifton went down the steps, to receive his guests.

Carolyn arose and withdrew into the house, fortunately before she had been recognized by the visitors; for it would have been shockingly out of all etiquette for a bride to be visible on her wedding-day before the wedding-hour.

When Mr. Clifton had ushered his guests into the drawing-room, he returned to the piazza to give some directions concerning the stabling of the horses, for where so many animals were expected to be provided for, it required some extra thought and care in their bestowal. While still giving his orders, he saw his younger daughter riding slowly up to the house. Pleased to see her return in safety, in spite of his evil forebodings of the morning, and thinking besides that

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she could give him some news of the laggard bridegroom, he hastened to meet her and lift her from the saddle, with a joyous—

"Well, my darling! well, my damask rose-bud! Back in time, according to promise, eh?"

But at the sight of her father, the girl's face flushed and paled so swiftly, her bosom rose and fell so rapidly, her whole frame was so agitated, her manner so confused, that the old man was seized with alarm and exclaimed, hurriedly—

"In the name of Heaven, my dearest child, what is the matter?"

But Zuleime, incapable of reply, looked as if she would sink into the ground.

Mr. Clifton's first definite thought was that some accident or catastrophe had befallen the bridegroom.

"Good Heaven, Zuleime, what has happened? Where is Archer Clifton? Speak—has he come to any harm?"

Much relieved that her father's suspicions had fallen out of the true track—yet still considerably shaken, Zuleime replied, in a faltering voice, that Captain Clifton had received orders, and had departed that morning with Lieutenant Fairfax for Winchester, where their regiment was quartered, and that Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain, desired to see Mr. Clifton as soon as possible. Without another word—totally unsuspicious that Mrs. Fairfax stood before him—the old man threw himself on horseback, and rode furiously toward Hardbargain.

Mrs. Frank Fairfax, our runaway daughter, and widowed bride, stole to her own little room to weep in secret, a little over her fault, but a great deal over the absence of and the danger about to befall her husband.

Dinner was served without Mr. Clifton, Miss Clifton, Zuleime, and the Misses Cabell. Mrs. Georgia Clifton alone entertained the newly arrived company. This did not occasion remark. Mr. Clifton was known to be absent, and it was customary, as I said before, for the bride and her attendants to be invisible.

In the meantime, Carolyn Clifton sat in her chamber—pride, love, regret, anger, hope, fear—all good and evil passions striving in her soul, or in turn holding the mastery over it. It was drawing near the hour when she should commence her bridal toilet, if indeed any bridal array was to be assumed that evening. Amidst all her keen anxiety, she dreaded lest some one should come in and tell her it was time to dress. What should her proud heart permit her to explain to such a one. She need not have feared interruption, however.

The Misses Cabell, her bridesmaids, it is true, sat together in their chamber very impatiently awaiting a message from the bride—very impatiently, indeed, for after her ceremonious dressing, they had their own very elaborate toilet to make. But they would not enter her dressing-room unsummoned, or at least until they should receive from some member of the

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family a suggestion that it was now proper to do so. And no one thought or remembered to give them the hint.

Mrs. Georgia Clifton—self-convicted of being the originator of all the great trouble that had befallen, and the greater that was about to befall the house—kept herself as much as possible aloof.

And Zuleime was as yet too deeply absorbed in the contemplation of her own recent bridehood, and the sorrow of her widowhood, to think of anything else.

Meanwhile old Mr. Clifton had ridden as for life up to Hardbargain, thrown himself from his horse, flung the bridle upon his neck and let him go loose, while he himself rushed up the stairs and into the hall, and without the ceremony of a rap, burst into the quiet presence of Mrs. Clifton as she sat sewing in her shady parlor. She arose calmly to receive him; and the very quietness of the lady threw the excited old gentleman off his guard, and out of his politeness, and into a rage.

"Well, madam!" he exclaimed, throwing his hat down with a thump into a chair, and tramping up and down the floor. *Here's* a pretty state of affairs!"

"Mr. Clifton, you are excited."

"Yes, madam, I AM excited!" interrupted the old man—"very *much* excited, madam! Very much excited, *indeed*, madam! Where is Archer Clifton? tell me that!"

"Mr. Clifton, sit down and compose yourself!"

"Compose myself! Compose myself with a prospect of three hundred people pouring into my house to-night, each one of them agape to see a wedding, and to have to tell them there will be no wedding!"

"Mr. Clifton, you can't regret this circumstance more than I do!"

"I *don't* regret it at all, ma'am! I rejoice at it, ma'am! I congratulate myself and my daughter, ma'am! But I'll have satisfaction, ma'am! I'll have satisfaction, ma'am!" said the old man, wiping the perspiration from his red face.

"Satisfaction for what you *rejoice* at, Mr. Clifton?" inquired the old lady, smiling at his unreasonable anger with herself.

"I'll—*yes*—I'll have satisfaction, ma'am!"

"From whom? From me? Do you intend to call me out as my son's representative? Do you wish to compel me to fight a duel; or to make an apology—which?" inquired the lady, coolly.

"Dem it, mem, I'll—I'll have satisfaction!" exclaimed the old man, growing shorter and shorter in his syllables. "I'll—I'll write to the Colonel of the regiment! I'll—I'll make the matter known to the Major General of the Army! I'll—yes, dem-me! I'll go to Washington and tell the President! I'll have that young rascal cashiered, and broken and dismissed from the service!"

"What! *all three!* Why, that is passing cruel! Quite as

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bad as being killed and murdered, and mortally wounded!" said the lady, smiling at his insane vehemence.

"Dem it, mem! don't take my words up!" he exclaimed, stamping up and down the floor, and then breaking out into vituperative abuse of Archer Clifton, all addressed to Mrs. Clifton, who, though becoming very much agitated, now preserved a dignified silence.

"Mr. Clifton forgets that he is a man, and that he speaks to a woman!" said a stern, but low-toned voice.

And the old gentleman turned to see Kate Kavanagh, "severe in youthful beauty," standing within the door; yes, in *beauty*, for her slight figure was drawn gracefully up—her bosom heaving, her fine head erected, her cheeks crimson, and her eyes intensely brilliant with the just indignation that moved her soul, as she walked straight up to Mrs. Clifton, and said—

"Dearest lady, allow me—*do* allow me to attend you to your own room, and be your substitute here, in waiting upon Mr. Clifton."

"No, Kate—no, my dear girl. I have to talk rationally to the man as soon as he comes to his senses," replied the lady.

"*Who is* that girl?" inquired the old gentleman, not recognizing Kate under the new aspect—or affecting not to do so. "Who *is* that girl, Mrs. Clifton?" he repeated, while the lady gazed fondly on her protégée.

"Miss Kavanagh; my son's ward, and my own adopted daughter," replied Mrs. Clifton, without withdrawing her fond gaze from the face of Kate, who was blushing under it.

"Miss Kavanagh, your son's ward, and your own adopted daughter! A promising relationship all around, that is—up—on—my—word—it—is!" said Mr. Clifton, very deliberately. "However," he added, "she has brought me to reflection, for which I thank her. And Mrs. Clifton, I feel sorry and mortified that I have been betrayed into some violence of speech and manner; it is a family failing, you know. Pray pardon me."

"Mr. Clifton, please to sit down near me. My voice is not strong. It may be disquietude, but I find a difficulty in raising it, or in keeping up a running conversation."

"My dear sister, I am afraid your lungs grow weak! I am indeed! I have noticed it before. I have said the same to Georgia and to Carolyn! Indeed, my dear sister Clifton, I wish you would take care of yourself. I was a brute to throw myself into a passion in your presence. I was, indeed! I see it has overcome you! Kate Kavanagh, my dear, you were perfectly right. I *did* forget myself. And you were a fine girl to recall me. Give me your hand, my dear."

Blushing deeply, as was her wont when praised, Kate gave her hand, saying—half apologetically, half appealingly—

"Mrs. Clifton is not strong, sir. She should not be agitated, especially so soon after her son has left her."

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"I know she is not strong! My dear sister, I wish you'd be careful of yourself! I do, indeed! You're not strong."

"After fifty, we do not grow strong as we grow old," said the lady, pointing to a chair by her side, and indicating that he should take it! He did so. And then Mrs. Clifton turned to Kate, and said—

"Now Catherine, my dear, I wish you to go up into my chamber and amuse yourself with a book, while I have a confidential talk with Mr. Clifton."

Kate immediately arose, courtesied, and left the room.

Mrs. Clifton turned to her brother-in-law, and said, inquiringly, "You know the cause of this lovers' quarrel?"

"Of course I do, madam! Satan fly away with them both! I know about it! It was about *her*—up stairs!" he replied, indicating Kate Kavanagh by a crook of his thumb.

"Yes; it was about Kate, but was very absurd!"

"Now I don't know that ma'am!"

"But it certainly *was*—ridiculous! Mr. Clifton! *she*, Catherine, knows nothing about it! Does not even dream that *she herself* had the remotest connection with the quarrel, and I hope and trust, that she never may suspect it. What I wish to say to you, is plainly this: That I know enough of human nature generally, and of young people particularly, and of Archer and Carolyn individually, to feel sure that this very absurd and extremely inconvenient quarrel and separation—"

"Yes, *very* extremely inconvenient, indeed!" emphatically interrupted the old man.

"Is only temporary—"

"Yes, ma'am, but that don't make it the less embarrassing—the less inconvenient!"

"I know it! Hear me out!"

"What the deuce, ma'am, are we to do with the people who are coming to the wedding even now?"

"I am about to tell you, if you will quietly listen to me."

"Well! well! Yes, ma'am; I beg your pardon—I am all attention."

"Carolyn, I am sure, already regrets her hasty violence of temper."

"Yes! that she does! It's easy to see that!"

"And Archer, who is slower to anger and slower to repentance—though deeper and stronger in both for being slow—Archer, in a very few days, will bitterly repent the step he has taken, more especially as being on his Western march, it will be impossible to retrace it. Under these circumstances, this is what you must say to the assembled company to-night:—You must tell them, that last night a peremptory order arrived for Captain Clifton to join his regiment immediately; and that the marriage is deferred for the present. Let the company then enjoy themselves as at a ball. And all will go off well, and without scandal. I will be present myself, as the representative of our side of the house. I sent for you,

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Mr. Clifton, to give you this advice, and to suggest this plan of action in meeting the embarrassing difficulties of this evening. I should not propose this, if I were not sure that the marriage is only deferred—that if the parties live, it will assuredly take place. I am *certain* it will, Mr. Clifton! I am willing to pledge my own truth and honor on it, and become responsible for it! The plan I propose to you for meeting the guests this evening, is truest, wisest and best—think of it!"

"I do not think of it at all! I see its excellence at a glance. I spring to meet it! I embrace it! I hug it to my heart! Oh, Mrs. Clifton, you are our deliverer! Oh, Mrs. Clifton! you are the great-grand-daughter of Oliver Cromwell, the general, the conqueror, the deliverer, the statesman, the politician, the diplomatist, the everything at an emergency!—You'll see how gloriously I'll execute your orders! You'll make me Lieutenant-General when you are Lady Protector of the Commonwealth!" exclaimed the old man, starting up and clapping his hat upon his head, and joking like a boy, for very joy that his difficulty was smoothed. He shook hands with Mrs. Clifton, begging her not to be late, as he should want the encouragement of her presence in order to enable him to make his speech. Then he mounted his horse, and rode rapidly away down the mountain-path to Clifton. When he arrived at home, he found the lawn already covered with carriages, horses and servants, and the piazza, halls, and all the first floor rooms, thronged with company. He passed through them all, bowing right and left and hastened to his daughter's room. Mr. Clifton had some doubts about getting his proud daughter to consent to the wise plan suggested by his sister-in-law. But he meant to carry his consent by a coup-de-main. So he pushed open her door, burst into her chamber, and threw himself, puffing, blowing, and perspiring, into the nearest chair, exclaiming—

"He's gone, Carolyn! He's clear gone, confound him!"

Carolyn drew nearer her father, and gazed into his face, to read there the confirmation of what she scarcely could believe. The old man wiped his streaming face with his handkerchief, and stuffed it again into his pocket, exclaiming—

"Yes! he's gone! gone! gone! gone!" Then opening wide his arms, he murmured, "But never mind, my dear child! you've got your old father left to love you, and to avenge you, too, if needful! Don't grieve! Come to my bosom! Don't grieve!"

"'*Grieve*,' sir!" exclaimed the imperious girl, elevating her queenly head, "we do not *grieve* for a traitor! We pronounce sentence on him, and execute it!"

"True! true! my noble girl! There spoke your mother's daughter! Yet—" suddenly cried the old gentleman, as by a quick recollection and revulsion of feeling, "what a devil of a kettle of fish this is, my dear! Blame the fellow, what are we to do? Deuce take the man—what are we to say to

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the people down stairs? *Say*, Carolyn! Woman's wit is quick! Can you think of anything?"

Carolyn stood in proud and bitter thought for some minutes, and then she smiled, with a scornful smile, and said—

"Do nothing, sir! Let all go on as was planned! Let the band of music take its place in the saloon! Let the wedding guests come, and be received! And *then* leave all the rest to me! And now, my dear father, pray excuse me, as it is time to dress."

"To dress! Why, Carolyn, what do you mean? Are you mad? Dress for what?" asked the old gentleman, anxious to know if perchance *her* idea in any way resembled the plan adopted by himself, from Mrs. Clifton's suggestion.

"No, sir! I am not mad. 'My pulse as yours, doth temperately keep time,'" said the young lady, extending her hand to the bell-rope, and ringing a peal that presently brought her woman hurrying up stairs and into her presence.

"Darky!" said she addressing her attendant, "go to Miss Zuleime, and to the Misses Cabell, and let them know that I have waited for them some time." The old handmaid went out, and Carolyn turned to her father, and said, "My dearest father! when I am dressed I will send for you, and we will have a conversation, in which I will tell you my simple plan for getting through the evening. I have not quite matured it yet! Ah! here are the girls! Good evening for a couple of hours, father!"

She opened the door for her father, who just escaped the young bridesmaids, who were coming in.

He went out muttering—

"I don't know what she means. I suppose I can have confidence in her. At least I must for the *present*, and then, there is Mrs. Clifton's plan." He went into his own room and arrayed himself in festive garments for the occasion, and then went below stairs to groan inwardly over the numerous arrivals of guests, whose carriages thronged the lawn, and whose servants crowded the piazza, hall and entries. Presently a servant approached him, and said, respectfully, in a low voice—

"Miss Clifton's compliments, sir, and will see you in her own room."

The old gentleman hastened thither. He found his daughter ready dressed, and quite alone. Her bridesmaids had gone to make their own toilets.

"Father!" she said, "I will not wear the willow for a recreant lover! I have determined that the festivities shall go on to-night. I will go down and lead off the first dance myself. You, my father, may explain, as you please, that the marriage is broken off, but that the music, dancing, and feasting are not arrested for that reason."

The old man had determined within himself what to speak, but he answered—

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"My dear child, are you *equal* to it?"

"*Equal, sir?* Try me!"

"Very well, my dear. Come! And I will say—what is proper upon the occasion."

In the meanwhile the splendid company assembled in the brilliantly lighted saloon, awaited with great impatience the entrée of the bridal train.

Made conspicuous in that gorgeous assembly by his black gown and bands, sat the clergyman who was to perform the ceremony.

Georgia—darkly, resplendently beautiful as ever, moved gracefully through the crowd—full of gracious courtesy, yet flushed, anxious, feverish—half fearing that the bridegroom would appear at this last moment. This fear was aroused by the presence, and the calm, cheerful, self-possessed looks of Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain. At length light steps were heard in the hall. The doors of the saloon were thrown open. And all eyes were turned to see the wedding procession enter. But instead of a bridal train, came old Mr. Clifton, leading in his daughter Carolyn. The surprise, the wonder of the company was at first silent and breathless as it was profound. But soon a low whisper arose, and like a low breeze in the leaves, passed from one to another, until the room was in a general buzz.

Mr. Clifton led his daughter into the centre of the saloon, and with her still hanging on his arm, turned and faced the company, waiting until they should be silent before he would speak. The father and daughter, as they stood there, presented a fine, imposing appearance. Both were arrayed with the gorgeous splendor that prevailed at that day.

The old gentleman had his snow-white hair turned back off his forehead, and carried all down to the nape of his neck, where it was plaited into a queue, and adorned with a large white satin bow, both snowy plait and bow in pleasant relief against the back of the dark crimson velvet coat—his vest and small clothes were of white satin, and his long hose of white silk were fastened to the small-clothes below the knee with white satin bows and gold buckles—his slippers were of crimson morocco, with high heels, large bows, and gold buckles. His dress was rather antiquated even for that day. And he stood there waiting for silence with the suave and stately courtesy of the old school gentleman.

Very much like a queen looked the beautiful Carolyn, but very little like a bride, either in her dignified self-possession, or in her magnificent array. Her fair hair was carried up above her forehead, and dressed high, in the regal style of that day. Its rich waves and bands were wreathed with pearls, and adorned with a plume of white ostrich feathers, powdered with minute silver spangles. Her neck and arms were bare, but adorned with pearls, and softly shaded with the finest lace at the edge of the bodice and sleeves. Her

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dress was of rich blue satin brocade, made with long waist, sharp pointed stomacher, and flowing sleeves and flowing skirt—the edges of the skirt finished with a very deep border of silver embroidery; a lighter border of the same running around the sleeves; the stomacher was embroidered with silver and pearls. Over her skirt she wore a train of splendid lace, lightly embroidered with a running vine of silver. She toyed with an elegant fan of carved mother-of-pearl and marabout feathers. She stood there, as I said, not at all like a bride, either in her gorgeous apparel, or her self-asserting manner. She stood there with a gay, proud air, beneath which none could have discerned the deeply humiliated spirit of the arrogant woman, or suspected the wounded and breaking heart of the forsaken bride.—When the murmur of voices which had greeted their entrance had subsided, and silence was restored, Mr. Clifton bowed deeply, and—in the somewhat high-flown grandiloquence of style he had once seen exhibited by a manager of a city theatre, when apologising for the non-appearance of the evening's star—spoke as follows: "Ladies and gentlemen, the distinction of your presence here this evening, has been prayed that you might give the honor of your countenance to the espousals of my nephew and daughter. You have graciously accorded us the dignity of your society here for that purpose." (An embarrassed pause, while the assembly listened in breathless curiosity and expectation, and he continued), "Ladies and gentlemen, 'man *pro*poses, but God *dis*poses.' The great Arbiter of destiny has ordained the issue of events, otherwise than as we had hoped, planned, and expected. Even last night suddenly came a peremptory order from head-quarters, to Captain Clifton, to join his regiment instantly for the purpose of taking the command of a detachment of cavalry, to march immediately to the Indian frontier to put down an irruption of the Shoshowanawas! Ladies and gentlemen!" (continued the old gentleman, warming up with his subject), "you know the stern, uncompromising duty of the soldier at such a crisis. One syllable—one single syllable comprehends his insupportable obligation—'Go.' The man, the lover, the bridegroom must give place to the soldier. As our greatest poet, Walter Scott, has it,—the soldier at the sound of the trumpet, must

> "'Leave untended the herd,
> The flock without shelter,
> The dead uninterred,
> The bride at the altar.'

"Ladies and gentlemen, our gallant Captain Clifton has literally left his 'bride at the altar.' But soldier's love may not mourn bridegroom's loss. Nor may we deny ourselves the distinction and joy of your presence for the whole night—nor," (the old man was unconsciously sliding from his lofty magniloquence down to the plain vernacular), "nor must I disappoint these young men and maidens of their

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dance to-night. Ho! music there! Strike up the liveliest quadrille air upon your list. Let them dance to the briskest music while they are fresh. Charley Cabell, my boy, come here and lead out your cousin Carolyn!"

Major Cabell advanced, and with much grace and dignity led Miss Clifton to the head of the quadrille, as the music pealed forth.

"Young gentlemen, select your partners!" exclaimed the old man, adding example to precept, by choosing the youngest and prettiest girl in the room, and leading her to the place right opposite his nephew and daughter. Soon all the surprise and disappointment were forgotten in enjoyment. The evening was spent in the gayest hilarity—Carolyn Clifton, the forsaken bride, apparently the gayest of the gay. So gay, indeed, was Miss Clifton, that she drew upon herself the severe animadversions of several ladies present, who affirmed that her conduct was heartless in the extreme; to laugh and sing and dance and jest with such thorough abandonment to pleasure, just after the departure of her lover to brave the ghastly horrors of Indian warfare. Much more did they approve of the pensive manners of Zuleime. Poor Zuleime was all unskilled in self-control—her heart was "exceeding sorrowful," and so she let it appear. The company separated at a very late hour that night, or rather a very early hour of the next morning. Those in the neighbourhood departing, those from a distance retiring to the chambers to take some sleep before breakfast, after which they were to set out for their homes.

CHAPTER X.

THE SISTERS.

Sister! since I met thee last,
O'er thy brow a change hath past;
In the softness of thine eyes,
Deep and still a shadow lies;
From thy voice there thrills a tone,
Never to thy childhood known;
Through thy soul a storm hath moved,
——Gentle sister, thou hath loved.

OVERTASKED, weary and exhausted by her long efforts, Carolyn Clifton sought her own chamber, and threw herself all splendidly arrayed as she was, upon her bed. She had no fear of interruption, for it was not yet daybreak, and her woman would not be up for several hours. So she was surprised, and not at all pleased when a gentle rap came to the door. She would not answer or move to let the rapper know that she was awake. She was weary, weary with acting for one night, and needed rest. But after the unknown had rapped two or three times, the door was gently opened, and the sweet voice of Zuleime was heard to say—

"Sister, I know you are not asleep—will you let me come

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in?" And without waiting for an answer, she entered, and softly closed the door, and came to the bedside, saying—"I heard you when you came up and threw yourself down on the bed, and I knew you were not asleep—let me stay with you, dear sister, won't you?"

"No, no, Zuleime, I wish to sleep," said Carolyn, still pressing both hands to her throbbing temples.

"Well, then, dear Carolyn, let me undress you, you can never compose yourself in that dress;" and the affectionate girl began to take off her slippers and stockings, saying—"I can take off all the small articles, and unlace your stomacher without disturbing you, sister, and then you need not stand up more than a minute to disrobe."

In indifference or abstraction, Miss Clifton permitted the gentle girl to unclasp all her jewels, and loosen her dress, without ever removing her hands, clasped tightly upon her temples, till Zuleime, wishing to take down the elaborate *coiffure*, gently withdrew them, and unwound the strings of pearls, and unfastened the plume of feathers. When the affectionate girl had laid aside all these glittering gewgaws, and freed her long, fair hair, and relieved her oppressed and fevered head, the proud and scornful Carolyn, subdued by the gentleness of her sweet, only sister, looked in her face, read there a strange sympathy, delicate as it was deep, and suddenly put her arms around her neck, drew her head down to her own, and kissed her fondly, murmuring—

"Oh, Zuleime! my child, my child! if you knew—"

"I *do* know, dearest Carolyn! Dearest sister, I *do* know it all! all! and feel it—feel it from the bottom of my heart! That is the reason I came in, Carolyn! But I did not come in to disturb you, even by my sympathy. I came in to put you to sleep. Stand up, dearest Carolyn, and drop these heavy robes, and I will throw this light wrapper around you, and then you can lie down again—there!"

"Oh! sleep!—when shall I sleep again?" bitterly asked Carolyn, as Zuleime laid her head tenderly back upon the freshened pillow.

"Well, don't talk, dear Carolyn, and you will see that God will send sleep." And Zuleime cooled her brow by passing over it several times a lump of ice in a napkin, and laid down by her side, and fanned her, in that measured, monotonous time, so inducive to slumber. So slowly she fanned her, resisting all her attempts to enter into conversation, until wearied nature yielded, and Carolyn was asleep. Then, as it was morning, Zuleime hoisted the windows, to admit a fresh current of air, but left the blinds closed, to exclude the light. Next, she put all Carolyn's things carefully away, and silently restored the room to order. Then she laid a folded napkin, dipped in ice-water, over the still burning brow, and cautiously left the room, to go and order tea and toast to be ready for Carolyn as soon as she should awake. She found

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the house below stairs in a great but comparatively silent bustle. The servants, who had scarcely retired the night previous, were engaged in clearing away the disorder of the saloon, parlor and dining-room, and in laying the cloth for breakfast for the numerous visitors who had remained over night. Zuleime passed on to the kitchen, and gave her orders, and then silently stole up stairs again to her sister's room.

Carolyn slept long and heavily. Several hours passed before she awoke. When she opened her eyes, and fixed them gratefully upon Zuleime, she raised her arms, again embraced her saying—

"You have comforted me, dear Zuleime."

"And I will comfort you more, dear sister. I know how to do it. How do you feel, Carolyn?"

"Better—my head clearer—my nerves steadier—but a weary weight at my heart."

"It shall go away, Carolyn. I know how to drive it away. But first you must take something."

And Zuleime rang the bell, and told the servant who appeared, to bring Miss Carolyn some *fresh* tea and toast.

While he was gone after it, Zuleime bathed her sister's face and hands, and combed out her hair, and by the time she was made comfortable, the servant re-appeared with the refreshments.

After Carolyn had breakfasted lightly, (and this was the first food she had taken for thirty-six hours,) she fell exhausted back upon her pillow, and said—

"I cannot appear this morning, Zuleime! I am tired of acting a part!"

"You need not do it, dear Carolyn! The people have breakfasted, and are almost all gone—and the others are going. Carolyn, dear, I saw *Archer* when he went away—"

Miss Clifton was still too proud to make a comment.

"Carolyn, he looked broken-hearted, despairing—indeed he did! Oh, Carolyn! I think if he could have hoped that you would have made up with him, he would have let his regiment go to perdition rather than not have hastened to your feet!"

"Why did he not try, then?"

"Oh, sister, you banished him, and men have some pride. He waited for your relenting, I feel sure!"

Carolyn remembered, with bitter regret, her refusal to let her father go to recall him.

"Carolyn, write to him. The detachment under his command does not march from Winchester for nine days yet. Write, Carolyn—there is an abundant time for him to get your letter and answer it before he goes. Then you will be reconciled and happy. Everything will be restored, and you will comfort yourself by remembering that he would have had to go, any way, and that he is gone reconciled!"

Miss Clifton shook her head.

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"No, Zuleime! I cannot! I should not know *how* to write such a letter! What could I say to him?"

"Say! *I* should know what to say! If you have banished him, revoke your sentence of exile. If you have ascertained that you have done him injustice, tell him so. If you are sorry that you parted in anger, let him know it. If you wish to hear from him before he goes, ask him to write to you."

"I could not!—I could not! I never could write such a letter! My heart-strings would crack in the attempt!"

"And are you *so* proud? And will you let him go forth to that ghastly Indian war—oh, God! my flesh creeps only to think of it!" said Zuleime, shuddering. "And will you not retract your false accusation, and revoke your cruel sentence of banishment, and express kind feelings and kind wishes for him about to be exposed to such horrors?"

"I can't! I can't! I *cannot!* My heart-strings would snap with the effort! I can bear sorrow, but not humiliation! I can die, but I cannot be humbled!"

"You cannot be humbled by an act of justice, sister. That letter would be only an act of justice. And, oh! it would give him such happiness, and bring you such sweet peace, in place of all this heart-burning. Think of it, dear Carolyn!"

While Zuleime spoke, a rap was heard at the door, and a servant appeared, and said that "Marster wished to see Miss Zuleime in the parlor."

"Think of it, dear Carolyn," said Zuleime, in a cheerful voice, kissing her sister's forehead, and then hastening out of the room.

Carolyn *did* think of it! The idea once presented, she could not banish it again;—the hope of a reconciliation once raised, could not be suppressed! She could think of nothing else. "It was but an act of common justice—it was a duty," she repeated to herself, many times, to answer the objections of her pride, which argued, "It is undignified, unwomanly, to make this overture." Then her love, her benevolence, her fears for him, pleaded, "It will make him so happy—it will fill his heart with courage, and his arm with strength for the battle! And suppose he should be killed?—what intolerable remorse will be added to your sorrow for him when you reflect that he died without a relenting word from you, who have been so cruelly unjust to him! That he died under your own sentence of exile! Besides, if none of these things happen, can *you* bear these weary, weary days of estrangement, absence, and suspense?—weary, weary days, that will slowly, slowly drag themselves through weeks, and months, and years of time?" Oh, no! No, no! She cannot bear that prospect! She will be just—she will do her duty, and satisfy her affection at the same time. *Down, pride!* for she will write that letter. She did write it. She did not read it over again, lest scorn should rise and compel her to hurl it down and set her heel upon it. She set her teeth almost grimly in

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her determination to protect that gentle, loving missive of sorrow and affection from an assault of her besetting sin, as she sealed and directed it. She then slipped on her dressing-gown, and stole down the back stairs, where she found a boy lounging. She ordered him to saddle a horse immediately, and take that letter to the post office. Nay, she waited till she saw the boy off, and was sure that none had seen him or the letter he carried. Then she returned to her own room, determined that no soul—not her father—not even Zuleime, should share her confidence and know her condescension.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. FAIRFAX AND MAJOR CABELL.

A father suffering, and a step-dame false,
A foolish suitor to a wedded lady.
SHAKSPEARE—CYMBELINE.

ZULEIME went into the parlor and found her father alone. He was sitting in an easy-chair, doing nothing, but apparently waiting for her.

"Come hither, Zuleime," he said.

And when she went up to him, he drew her upon his knee, and passed his left arm around her waist, while, with his right hand, he smoothed her black hair.

And he gazed fondly in her face. He noticed that her cheek was pale, and her countenance pensive, but hoped that it was from the excitement of the night before. He could not bear to think of its being regret for Frank. He feared to ask her the cause of her seriousness. He disliked to recall Frank in any manner to her recollection. He wished her to forget him, if possible. At least, *he* would do so.

"Zuleime," he said, after he had stroked her hair some time, "you know, my love, that your aunt Cabell, and your cousins, are going back to Richmond to-day."

"Are they, sir? I did not know it," said Zuleime, turning paler, with apprehension of something that might be coming.

"Yes, my dear, they are. And Zuleime—" here he paused—then he went on, "you have been thinking, I suppose, that you should have to return with them, to enter upon your school duties again, as the first of September is so near."

"I had not thought of it, sir! So many things happening, put it out of my head. But I am quite willing to go, and can be ready in half an hour."

"Thank you, my dear child. I am very glad to see you so prompt to oblige me; but, my Zuleime, I have good news for you."

"Good news, sir?"

"Yes, girl! the best news! the *very* best news! news that young ladies always rejoice to hear!"

"What news, sir?" she asked, fearfully.

"Don't whine, girl! it is not your sentence of death! It

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is your deed of emancipation! Your 'free papers, as the niggers would say. You are not to return to school any more! Are you not surprised? Are you not rejoiced now?"

Zuleime was not. She was anxious, foreboding.

"Why don't you speak, my dear? Ain't you glad you're not going back to school, to leather shoulder braces and back boards, and square and compass rules and regulations, that mean nothing, unless they mean persecution and torture! Say, ain't you glad?"

"I think I had rather go back to school for the present, sir."

"Nonsense, now, my dear! Ah! I see how it is! You want to return with your dear aunt Cabell, and the dear city cousins—especially cousin Charley! Eh, you monkey! You grow tired of the country and your old father, as soon as ever your aunt and cousins talk about returning to the city! Ah! you rogue," said the old man, chucking her under the chin, and devoutly praying that he might be right in his conjecture—for, oh! that child's happiness! It lay nearer his heart than anything else on earth or in heaven.

"Dear father!" she said, embracing him, "I do not wish to leave you, indeed I do not. I prefer the country. And I had rather *never* leave you or my home."

"Dear little rogue, now don't tell me that! I know better you know! And it is quite natural, and nobody blames you! The young bird must leave its nest, and the young girl her home, when she becomes a wife. Your mother left her parents and came home here with her husband. So do not think, my love, that your old father will charge you with selfishness for wishing to leave him—no, not wishing to *leave him*, but wishing to go with one who is to be your husband."

Zuleime dropped her head, to conceal the deadly pallor that crept over her face.

"Yes, dear Zuleime, you will soon return to Richmond, though it will be not as a school-girl—but as a happy bride—as Mrs. Major Cabell! What a sonorous name and title for my little, romping Zuleime! Here, Charley Cabell! I have broken the ice, now come and speak for yourself!" exclaimed Mr. Clifton to Major Cabell, who was going by the door. Major Cabell came in, passing by the old gentleman, who had seized his hat, and not trusting himself to look at his daughter, rushed out of the room. Zuleime remained standing where he had placed her when he put her off his knee—panic struck—stupid—until Major Cabell took her hand, and attempted to lead her to a seat, then snatching her hand away with a shudder, she asked almost wildly—

"Cousin Charles, when does father want this marriage to come off!"

"As soon as my dearest Zuleime will consent to make me the happiest of men!" replied the common-place wooer, attempting to recapture her hand, but she retreated shuddering, and asking, in a frantic tone and manner, in great contrast to her calm words—

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"Cousin Charles, do me a favor! Do not press this matter for a week or so."

"Heaven forbid that I should hurry a lady, though that lady be my own little cousin and betrothed—only fix the day and I will rest content—so that it be not a far distant day," he said, re-capturing her hand, throwing his arm around her waist, and drawing her towards him.

"Please, don't! Let me go, cousin Charles!" exclaimed the girl, in great distress, struggling to free herself.

"'Please, don't let me go, cousin Charles!' I don't intend to, pretty cousin, until you tell me when you will give yourself to me!" replied Major Cabell, kissing her all the more heartily because she strove to escape.

"You know what I meant! Let me alone! It is unmanly to behave so! Don't make me hate you!" was on her quivering lips and in her flashing eyes, as by a sudden effort she threw his arms off and sat down; but then she recollected her father, and the cruel power Major Cabell seemed to possess over him, and she choked down the indignant words, and said instead—

"Please, don't hurry and worry me, cousin Charles!—this is so very sudden! I am sure I never dreamed you would ask for poor me for years to come yet. I am so young."

"'So young!' Ah, Zuleime, that is a piece of pretty little womanish hypocrisy—a little finesse that belongs to your character, and is inherited from your French mother! 'So young!' Now, my pretty childish cousin, you know you have received an offer of marriage this very week! And that, indeed, has accelerated my proposal. Fair Zuleime, a man does not care to see his young betrothed bride courted by another!"

"*I know that!*" replied Zuleime, in a peculiarly sad voice, moving to the other end of the room.

The slightest gesture of avoidance of him by the girl, seemed to act as a provocative on him, so he followed her, and clasped her in his arms, and laughing, almost rudely kissed her, begging her between the kisses not to set his heart on fire by her charming prudery and petulance, but to fix the day, like a good, sensible girl as she was. Almost frantic with rage and shame at being so freely handled, the Clifton blood rushed to her brain, and forgetting her father's interest and every thing else, she dashed her hand violently into his face, and before he recovered from his astonishment, broke from him and escaped—her heart beating with one thought—one sudden, joyous thought—that come what might, she never could be either forced or persuaded into marriage with Major Cabell, because she was already a wedded wife—no set of circumstances, whatever, could make it her duty, or make it even possible for her to marry Major Cabell. In all her sorrows, that was one blessed truth to sit down and rest upon. All her duty was now due to her husband. And with a youthful wife's enthusiasm firing and strengthening her heart, she

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thought she could stand as upon a rock, secure against a sea of troubles. Poor child! she had yet to learn that no position founded on a fault is for a moment safe. Several things soon forced themselves upon her memory and grieved her heart;—her father's unknown but certain danger, her own promise of secrecy in regard to her marriage, the necessity of giving some definite answer to Major Cabell, and the obligation pressing upon her to prevent, by all and any means, the highly improper and extremely offensive demonstrations of passion from her suitor. She determined to write to Frank, tell him all that had occurred, and ask his advice and direction; and to do this it was necessary to gain time, and to give no false promise in the interim. Already was Zuleime beginning to taste the bitter fruits of her stolen marriage, and might have exclaimed, in the perplexity of her distracted heart and brain—

> Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
> When first we venture to deceive.

While Zuleime's heart was beating so fast with many emotions, her father sauntered into the parlor, where he found Major Cabell caressing and soothing his afflicted face.

"Well, Charley, boy! How is it with you, eh? Could you win a hearing from my little girl, eh? Give her time, you know, eh?" said the old gentleman, affecting a lightness of heart which he was very far from feeling.

To his surprise, Major Cabell laughed heartily, still coaxing his ill-used phiz.

"What's the matter, Charley? What's amused you, eh?"

"Your girl! By my soul, Governor, I shall end in falling seriously in love with that girl! I didn't fancy her much at first to tell you the truth! She was entirely too good humoured —always laughing. And I had a fancy for marrying a shrew, just for the spicy fun of taming one! The same instinct, Governor, that makes me like to spring upon the back of the most vicious horse I can find, and ride and lash and spur and fatigue the soul out of his body, until I break his back or his temper, one—eh, Governor?"

The old man's florid cheeks became pale with rage, and he felt an impulse to kick the puppy out, but a terrible necessity tied his tongue and hands, and Charles Cabell went on laughing and talking to this effect:—

"Now, then, having a fancy to marry and tame a shrew—a real live, vicious, beautiful vixen—I did not want the spiciest part of the sport taken out of my hands by fathers and mothers and pastors and masters. I shouldn't have thanked any of you for presenting me with a model wife, already smoothed down and polished to my hand. D—n your pretty pieces of perfection! I'll none of them—flat, insipid nonentities!—formed and *re*-formed, and modelled, and *re*-modelled, and rubbed down and polished until they all look as much alike as beads on a string! No, none of your polished gems

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for Charles Cabell!—the bright, pure, rough, sharp ore! Now, of Zuleime, I thought her far too much educated—too good humored, too polite, too docile, too much of the young 'lady,' too little of the wild young animal—and flat and insipid in consequence; so I cared very little about her. But, ha, ha, ha! I never was more mistaken in my life! She's a prize, I tell you! A prize of the first class! Look you! I coveted a shrew! I've found a virago! full of blood and fire! strong and vicious, I tell you! ha, ha, ha! Think of her dashing her little hand in my face when I went to kiss her, and before I recovered my eyesight and senses, throwing me off as if I had been a child, and escaping! Ha, ha, ha! I under-estimated her strength!—Never mind! let the little tigress look out for the next time I get her in my arms!"

The old man's bosom was filled to bursting with suppressed passion, but he answered, calmly—

"Oh! she's young—she's young, a spoiled child—a spoiled child; be patient with her—she means well—give her time—be patient with her."

"Patient with her! Why, uncle, I wouldn't have her a bit different from what she is! She's charming, delightful, piquant, spicy! 'Patient with her!' Why, Gov', I shall end in falling desperately in love with her! But I say, nunc! make the little virago fix our marriage day, will you? I have got to go out now and have Spitfire saddled; those fellows never draw the girth tight enough, or fix the bit firm enough—and I have to pull her head off to stop her sometimes, for she is the foul fiend incarnate when she gets to running. I'll make Zule ride her sometime, to see which will get the better of the other. Say, Gov', let me have my answer when I get back—do you hear." And seizing up his riding-whip and cracking it against his boots, he went out.

The old man boiled over—he clenched his teeth, and shook his fist—nay, shook his whole person, as he turned livid with rage; then his arms fell helplessly by his side—he sank into a chair—dropped his face upon his hands, and groaned aloud. He felt a pair of arms encircling his neck, and a sweet voice murmuring in his ear—and he raised his head to see Zuleime, and to hear her ask in loving tones—

"Father, what is it?"

He put his hand tenderly around her waist, and drew her gently to his knee, and said, while he gazed remorsely into her face—

"I am a villain, Zuleime! A hoary-headed villain!"

Zuleime placed her hand upon his mouth to stop the dreadful words, and pressed her lips to his brow, with a look and manner of the profoundest love and veneration.

"Yes, a hardened, persevering sinner, Zuleime! For I intend to persevere! I intend to give you to Charley Cabell, my child," he said, gently removing her hand, and still gazing on her. He continued—"I love you so much, Zuleime!

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I love you so much! But, dear child. He's coming! Dear child, tell me when you will marry Charley—Tuesday three weeks or four weeks? Don't let it be longer than four weeks, my girl!"

"Father! will you tell me *why* you wish me to marry cousin Charles?"

"I cannot! I cannot! *My child*, I cannot. It is for your good, I hope! Some day I will, perhaps. Tell me now, *that's* a good girl. What day will you give this little hand to cousin Charley?"

"Father, I can't possibly give an answer for a week yet; indeed, father, I cannot!"

"Come, now, nonsense, my child; why can't you? Here is Charley now! come!"

"I cannot, father!"

The old gentleman kissed, and coaxed, and almost wept; a manner of attack so hard to be resisted, that had Zuleime been really free, she would have sacrificed her own and Frank's hopes, and yielded. But Zuleime was not free, and therefore was as firmly proof against persuasion, as she would have been against force. Two powerful motives operated in preventing her from confessing her marriage—first her promise to keep it secret, and then the fear of precipitating some violent scene between her father and cousin, or some fatal catastrophe to the household. To end the conflict, and to gain time to consult Frank, by writing, was what she most wished now. Finally, she promised to give Major Cabell his answer in a week, and to marry him—*if she should ever marry anybody.*

With this promise, Major Cabell seemed satisfied—and with his mother and sisters took leave of Clifton. And Zuleime retired to her own room, full of self-reproach for her own deception.

CHAPTER XII

SUSPENSE.

Uncertainty!
Fell demon of our fears! The human soul
That can sustain *despair*—endures not *thee.*—ANON.

A WEARY week passed away. Zuleime had written to Frank, and Carolyn, we already know, had despatched a letter to Archer. But the week had passed away, and no answer to either had come from Winchester. Had the sisters confided in each other, such mutual confidence might have soothed the soul-sickening anxiety of *one* at least. Carolyn would have known that some accident *must* have prevented Frank Fairfax from receiving or answering the momentous letter of his youthful wife, and she would have felt that the same cause had probably operated in the case of Archer Clifton. But the sisters did not entrust their secrets to each other. Zu-

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leime was withheld by her sacred promise. Carolyn by her pride. But the wife bore the pain of suspense far better than the maiden. The wife had perfect faith in her young husband, and knew that some adverse chance had hindered his getting or replying to her letter. The maiden knew that she had unjustly banished her lover. And she had no faith in the love that endureth all things. Carolyn had never suspected the depth of that calm, secure, habitual affection—which had from childhood grown—until now. While life and love and hope had flowed smoothly on, her emotions were serene and moderate. But now that the quiet stream had been stemmed by rock and breakers, it was lashed into fury and roared in whirlpools. The calm sentiment rose to turbulent, maddening passion. Her days were restless, her nights sleepless, until, as the week wore away, her nerves were wrought to such severity of tension, that you might know that at the end of uncertainty, whether that were joy or sorrow, they must alike suddenly give way. Towards the last of the week, she had privately besought her father to ride to Winchester, and see the detachment off, and bring her the last news of it. The request had been confidential—yet do you feel all that it had cost her haughty heart? During the absence of Mr. Clifton, suspense was wrought up to agony. Her days and nights were feverish, delirious, and so confused into each other, that she scarcely knew the fitful, disturbed visions of the night, from the wild and anxious broodings of the day. The day upon which her father was expected back, was the acme, the crisis of her suffering. Oblivious of pride and caution, careless of exposing herself to the malign sneers of Georgia, or the rude comments of the servants, she sat in the piazza, watching the road by which the carriage should come —one wild, anxious, desparing hope possessing her. "The drowning catch at straws"—and she, in her despair, had clutched one mad possibility, and clung to it until to her weakened, confused, insane soul, it seemed a probability, and then almost a certainty. It was the hope that Clifton might return with her father! Oh, yes! That Clifton might resign his commission and come back to her! Oh! if indeed he loved her, as he had a thousand times sworn, if he sorrowed over their estrangement only half as much as she did, no hope of glory, no fear of disgrace would keep him back. The more she brooded over this, the more likely, the more certain it appeared to be. And she sat and gazed up the dim forest road.

The sun sank to the edge of the horizon, and lit up all the mountain tops with fire, and then went down. And when she could no longer see, she still sat and strained her ear to catch the distant sound of wheels.

The moon arose, and flooded all the mountain scenery with silver light, and flashed upon that distant bend of the river, until it seemed a silver lake, lying among the dark hills and

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pointed the peaks of White Cliffs, until they stood up and glittered, like an enormous row of spears, against the deep blue sky.

At last, at last the very distant sound of wheels came faintly like a doubt to her ear, and faded away again. Then it came more distinctly, nearer, and a moving object appeared upon the road. And she knew indeed it was her father's carriage. She saw and recognized it in the moon-light. It turned into the lawn gate, rolled rapidly around the circular drive and swept swiftly up to the entrance, where it stopped. The steps were let down, the door opened, and old Mr. Clifton got out, followed by—no one.

Carolyn had bent eagerly, unconsciously forward; now she started up and caught her father's hand, and gazed silently, imploringly into his face, for the news she could not ask for.

"The detachment has marched, my dear child! Marched the morning of the day upon which I reached Winchester, and two days before it was expected to go. So, you see, I could not get a sight of either Frank or Archer. They were thirty miles on their road before I reached the city. Can't think what could have been the reason of the new order, to anticipate their departure by two days. However! cheer up! No use fretting, my dear! No use fretting! The family have supped long ago, of course—have they kept my supper hot for me? I am as hungry as an old wolf," said the old man.

Carolyn did not hear him. Her hold relaxed upon his arm, her hands flew up to her head, and she turned, as one struck with sudden blindness, and tottered into the house. It was so dark in the shady piazza, screened from the moonbeams by interlacing cypress vines, that the old man did not see her state. He hastened into the house, where another awaited him with equal anxiety.

Zuleime's private hope had been that Frank would seize the opportunity of Mr. Clifton's visit, and confess his marriage, and invent some way of delivering her father from the toils of Major Cabell.

"What news, father?" she asked, meeting him in the hall.

"'What news?' Why, I am as hungry as a bear, my pet! That's the news! I stopped to supper at L——. But, my life! They'd like to have poisoned me with *fried* beefsteaks and heavy biscuits and green coffee. Couldn't touch a morsel, child! And now I am starved up to a savage pitch! What have you got for supper?"

"Turtle soup and old crusted port, among other things, father," replied Zuleime, waving her own anxiety for the sake of satisfying him.

"TURTLE SOUP! And OLD CRUSTED PORT;" exclaimed the old man, in an ecstacy of delight. "Why, where on earth did they come from?"

"The turtle came from a ship at Norfolk, and was sent

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hither by Major Cabell, who added a dozen of port of his own importation," said Zuleime, dying with anxiety to hear from Frank.

"Ah-h-h-h! *That* was kind! *He's* a fellow! He'll make a magnificent husband and son-in-law, Zuleime! I hope you know how turtle soup should be made?"

"Father, I know it should be eaten quite *hot*, and it is on the table by this time. Come in."

The old man needed no pressing, but went into the dining-room, and sat down at the table, with a face radiant with delight. Zuleime waited on him, although there was a servant in attendance. And when he had freely partaken of turtle soup, devilled crabs, a roasted fowl, etc., washed them down with port wine, she brought him a cup of fragrant Mocha coffee and his case of cigars. And he sipped the coffee with an air of infinite leisure, and then lit a cigar and puffed slowly away, as if eternity was before him.

"Father, what news from Winchester?" again asked Zuleime, though her hopes had fallen very low. "What news, dear father?"

"What's that to you, my pet? Will you let me digest my supper in peace?"

Zuleime sat down, but looked so anxious, that her very *looks* worried the old gentleman, and he said—

"Don't you know, girl, that indigestion is very dangerous to a man of my time of life? It may bring on apoplexy! Don't worry me!"

Zuleime veiled her anxious gaze, but even then the paleness of her cheeks annoyed her father, and he testily inquired—

"Now, what is it to you? I can understand Carolyn's anxiety. I cannot comprehend yours at all! There, now. Go and send my wife to me!"

Zuleime arose to obey, but before she went, she threw her arms around his neck, and asked—

"Dearest father, *only* tell me! Were our friends well? Have they gone? Did they send any message?"

"Only answer you three questions at a time! That is reasonable! However, I can answer all in one. I have not seen our friends. Their detachment left Winchester twelve hours before I reached there. And now I'll tell you what I did not like to tell Carolyn, poor girl! Namely, that the detachment marched two days earlier than was intended, upon account of dispatches received from Fort ———, praying for speedy succor in a reinforcement. The savages have been massacreing and scalping there at a most tremendous rate! It is really a very dangerous service, Indian warfare! God grant that our young friends may return to us safe! Why don't you go along and tell Georgia to come to me?"

Zuleime kissed her father, settled the cushion under his feet, and went on her errand. That dispatched, she sought her own chamber, and lay down to collect her thoughts. No

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letter or message from her husband, and her promise of secrecy in regard to her marriage, binding on her as ever. And next week she must give an answer to her father for Major Cabell. She was confident that one of two things had happened. Either her letter had never reached Frank, or else his answer had been lost. And by the transaction only one week's respite had she gained for her father—for next week her refusal must be decided and final, and then—what might not the consequence be to him? These thoughts excited her mind, and kept her awake. And despite her determination to sleep, and her efforts to do so, she heard every passing hour strike. It was soon after one o'clock, that she had fallen into a fitful slumber, when she was awakened by the sound of a gay, high voice, intermingling merry words and joyous laughter. Indeed, there seemed to be not only one, but many voices, talking and laughing in the most jocund manner. And strange—passing strange! it seemed to come from her sister's room, which adjoined hers! She listened awhile; the words became fewer, but the laughter grew wilder! And then it struck upon her frightened senses that Carolyn was a maniac, talking, laughing to herself! Springing from her bed, and without even waiting to slip on a gown, she ran into the passage and knocked at her sister's door, and attempted to push it open. It was locked on the inside, and all her efforts to force an entrance were vain, and all her entreaties for admission were answered by peals of unconscious laughter. At last she ran to her father's door, and rapped loudly, exclaiming—

"Father, father! Get up! get up! Something, I am sure, has happened to Carolyn! Something dreadful! Get up! get up!"

The old man was hard to awaken, even by the efforts of Georgia, who was aroused at once, and came and opened the door for Zuleime! And all this time the sound of loud talk, high laughter, and wild snatches of song, as from several excited people, rather than from one, issued from Carolyn's chamber. At length, by the united exertions of his wife and daughter, the fatigued and drowsy old gentleman was aroused and placed upon his feet, and made to

> "Understand a horror in their words—
> If not the words."

He threw on his shawl gown and hastened to Carolyn's door, which was instantly forced open.

And what a sight met their eyes!

There stood Miss Clifton arrayed in her gorgeous bridal costume, looking gloriously beautiful, though certainly as no bride ever looked before! The raging fever had given the brightness and richness of the carnation rose to her complexion, and imparted a supernatural light to her eyes, that burned and flashed, and seemed to strike fire as they sprang from one to the other of the intruders, with a mad, joyous, defiant glance!

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The alarm of her father was unlimited, unspeakable! He darted from the room, and almost precipitated himself down the stairs in his haste to mount and dispatch a servant for the family physician. And while he was gone, Georgia and Zuleime, by coaxing and humoring the phantasy of the poor girl, succeeded in undressing her and putting her to bed—she still raving about her marriage, and sometimes breaking out into a wild laugh, and once telling Georgia that *she*, being a married woman, had no right or business to be officiating as bridesmaid.

It was near morning when the doctor came. After examining the state of the patient, he pronounced her disease to be brain fever, brought on by over-excitement of the nervous system. He wrote prescriptions, and remained with her until they were administered. And then he departed with a promise to return early in the forenoon.

Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain, was summoned, and lost no time in hastening to the sick room of her daughter-in-law, as she chose to call Carolyn.

For many days the struggle between life and death went on, and no one, not even the medical attendant, was able to form an opinion as to which power would eventually conquer.

Mrs. Clifton had taken her station by the bedside of the patient as permanent nurse, and she constantly refused to yield her post to any other person. And it was to her vigilant attention, quick perceptions, and intelligent treatment, that all the family ascribed the recovery of the girl. For the crisis came and passed, and Carolyn Clifton lived.

But no sooner was the patient pronounced out of danger, and the excitement of anxiety over, than the nurse herself fell ill. And Mrs. Clifton, exhausted, prostrated, entered her carriage, and was driven to Hardbargain.

CHAPTER XIII.

ARCHER CLIFTON'S SKETCHES.

The deepest sorrow that stern fate can bring
In all her catalogue of suffering,
An eating rust—the spirit's direst pain—
To love, adore—nor be beloved again,
Or know between you lies a gulf that ever
Your forms, your hopes, your destinies must sever—MRS. LEWIS.

As soon as Mrs. Clifton reached home—leaning on the arm of her maid, she walked up stairs and entered her son's deserted room, and when her attendant had relieved her of scarf and bonnet, she lay down upon his lounge, and sent Henny for Kate Kavanagh. In less than half an hour Kate entered. And the lady turned to her and said—

"Catherine, my dear, I must take you into my confidence—yes, and into other people's too, whether they approve it or not. Draw Archer's writing-desk up here to the side of the lounge. I want you to write a letter to him. Catherine's

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brow crimsoned, and she trembled very much as she obeyed. "My dear Catherine, I am sure you will be discreet, and never speak of what I am about to entrust to you. I can rely on you?" said the lady, interrogatively, raising those fever-brightened dark eyes to the girl's face. Catherine nodded quickly, in her usual way, when the words would not come. "You see, my dear child, this most unhappy quarrel between Carolyn and Archer, is causing a great deal of unnecessary suffering to both—and Carolyn, as the frailer of the two, is nearly dying under it. Her brain fever was caused by it. And it was as much as Dr. Barnes and myself could do, to bring her safely through it with life and reason. This estrangement between them must not continue, or she *will* die. She is not so strong as she looks to be. Indeed, she is very delicate, like her mother. Archer is far on his Western march now, and cannot return of course; but he must write to her, and comfort her. I wish you to write and tell him so. Now, then, child, you know the object. Open the desk, and lay out the paper, while I try to think what I want said, and how I want you to say it." Catherine's hands quivered as she turned down the leaf of the desk, and mechanically laid the paper out on the top. "Just date it, dear child, and then I will tell you how to begin." Catherine dipped her pen in ink, and was just about to put it to paper, when something there caught and held her eyes, and she gazed with dilating pupils, and trembled more than ever.

The paper before her was covered with a water-colored sketch of Marguerite, of France, at the siege of Damietta. And the ideal face of the royal heroine, was the real one of the humble Catherine herself. And in the corner of the paper were the initials A. C. He had taken *her* homely features as his notion of those of the heroic Queen of St. Louis. And as she gazed, her heart shuddered with a strange, wild emotion of blended wonder, joy and remorse. The nature of the maiden was becoming vaguely intelligible to herself.

And Mrs. Clifton did not see her trance, but lay upon the sofa very weary, with her hands pressed upon her temples, trying to settle in what manner she should address her son upon this delicate subject. And Catherine forgot everything in the sketch before her, and the tumultuous, blissful, painful emotions it excited. An abyss was suddenly thrown open in the depths of her heart, whose existence was unsuspected till now. *Now* was she sorry that the marriage between Archer Clifton and his cousin, was broken off—by mutual consent? She tried very earnestly to feel sorry, for she believed it her duty to be so. She forced herself to remember Carolyn's illness, and Archer's own suffering, in consequence of the estrangement between them. But, oh! there lay that picture before her eyes, with her own plain face idealized, glorified up to a high, pure, divine beauty, such as it had never, even in her highest, holiest, most inspired moods, pos-

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sessed. And a voice from her profound heart whispered—"Oh, yes, and he could make me really beautiful and glorious as his ideal there—for he could make me good, and glad, and great beyond whatever I could make myself—if he chose!" She reproached her heart severely for its seductive whisper. She offered up a silent prayer to God to forgive her, and save her soul from secret sin. She called herself foolish, presumptuous, treacherous. But, oh! in spite of all these, would sparkle up from the depths of her spirit, sprays of gladness, as if there had suddenly sprung within an everlasting fountain of joy. Yet again she blamed herself most bitterly. She repeated that despairing complaint or confession of David—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." She almost realized its truth. She silently cried to God to enter her heart, and expel its secret sin.

"Well, child! are you ready!" inquired Mrs. Clifton, withdrawing her hands from her temples, and looking towards the entranced girl. Kate did not hear or see, her soul and senses were absorbed in the subject before her. Yet she did not think or hope about the future. It was the present, the present that absorbed her heart, despite of will, resistance and conscience.

"Kate! are you asleep or in a trance?" asked the lady gazing at her.

The maiden started, and blushed deeply.

"Catherine! what are you thinking of?" she repeated, fixing her dark eyes upon the girl, until they seemed to burn into her soul.

Kate looked guilty and bewildered, recovering herself by an effort, and answered, almost at random—

"This is not letter paper, madam, it is Bristol board."

"Oh, well! there is writing paper in the other department of the desk, my child, get it out."

Kate examined the contents of the desk, and then replied—

"There is no letter paper here, whatever, Mrs. Clifton."

"What are those?"

"Only card boards and sketches, madam."

"Sketches. That is just like Archer, to keep his sketches in his writing desk. His writing material will no doubt be found in his portfolio. But let me see those sketches, Catherine; I have not seen them yet, and they will be something new to me—almost like a recent letter from Archer. I like to look over his drawings; they always mean something apart from their subject, as it seems to me. I often think his sketches form a running commentary, though an involuntary one, on his life and thoughts! Hand them to me, my child."

"These are only old historical subjects," said Kate, with visible reluctance to produce them.

"Pass them over to me, my dear. If their subjects are as old as the Chinese History of the Creation, they will nevertheless be eloquent to me of my son's present mood—of the

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state of his heart, and the progress or the retrogression of his mind. You cannot imagine, Catherine, the anxious curiosity of a mother to catch furtive glimpses of the interior of that heart she cannot always enter, and which is often hidden, too, from its possessor! 'We know not what manner of spirit we are of,' Catherine. For instance, do you know your own heart or mind? In all hearts lie depths below depths, never known to the owner until some earthquake of sorrow, or of passion, throw them open to view! There are in all minds powers beyond powers of achievement or of endurance, unsuspected by their possessor until some emergency calls them into action! But give me the drawings, Kate, they will refresh me like a talk with Archer."

Catherine lifted them, *en masse*, and handed them to Mrs. Clifton, who took and examined each separately and leisurely.

"Um-m-me," she said, smiling gently, as she recognized their subjects:—"'Marguerite of France, at the Siege of Damietta,' 'Joan of Arc, at Rhiems,' 'Margaret of Anjou, at St. Albans,' 'Last interview of Lord and Lady Russel,' and all these battle-axe heroines, wearing the likeness of my serious, domestic Catherine! In truth, Archer has put you through as many characters and costumes as though he designed you for a tragic actress, in the heaviest line."

Kate Kavanagh did not like that.

"But two of these characters bear any affinity to you, my dear. I cannot fancy any similitude between the tender and fiery Marguerite—that 'falcon-hearted dove,' or her haughty and remorseless namesake of Anjou, and my grave, gentle Catherine. But the high and holy enthusiasm irradiating Joan's face, and the noble resignation of Lady Russel's countenance, suit your striking features very well. But I am talking like a mediocre stage critic. Captain Clifton has a very high opinion, of you, my Catherine. Pray try to merit it, my dear girl!" concluded the lady, with a little pardonable motherly pride.

Kate Kavanagh looked down, and fingered the pens and wafers, for she felt the lady's eyes gazing through and through her—reading her very soul.

"By-the-way, Catherine, have you seen Captain Clifton's last work of art?"

"No, madam." (I wonder why she calls him "Captain Clifton" to *me*—she never did so before, thought Kate).

"It is a highly finished miniature of Miss Clifton, painted on ivory. He had it set in a plain gold locket, and has taken it away with him. I saw him hang it around his neck, and lay it near his heart."

Catherine honestly believed that she was glad to hear this, for it seemed one more stay to keep her thoughts right.

"And that, Catherine, is one reason among many others I have, for knowing his indestructible love for Carolyn. And that is why I feel no hesitation in having this letter written,

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to end this foolish quarrel, and to restore peace to these two unhappy young people," said Mrs. Clifton, looking, Catherine thought, very strangely at her—*so* strangely, that the maiden felt her cheeks burn with a vague sense of humiliation.

She asked herself—Could Mrs. Clifton have read what had been passing in her mind? Well! if so—that was another band to bind her thoughts to the right.

"Now, then, to your task, my child. You will find paper in Captain Clifton's portfolio." She spoke gently as ever to Kate, but still called her son "Captain Clifton," as if to widen the distance between them.

Kate felt troubled at this, and then took herself to task for a state of mind so morbidly acute to impressions, that she noticed everything, even that trifle. She searched and found the writing materials in the portfolio, and went to work and wrote, from Mrs. Clifton's dictation, a letter, full of gentle rebuke, and kind, motherly counsel, to Archer Clifton. And all to the end that he should write immediately, and reconcile himself to Carolyn, who was extremely ill, and whom his mother felt assured, she said, that he must be most anxious to propitiate. The letter was sealed and dispatched, and the lady, thoroughly worn out, and leaning upon the arm of Catherine, sought her own bed-chamber.

The next morning, Mrs. Clifton was so weary that she could only leave her bed-chamber to lie upon the sofa in the shady parlor, where she could be at hand to direct the operations of her house servants—now engaged in cutting out and making up the Fall clothing for the negroes. Catherine came early to assist in this onerous task. It was in the afternoon while the lady was still reclining on the sofa, and Catherine standing at a work-table basting a linsey-woolsey frock-body—when a horse was heard to gallop up into the yard, a man to jump off and hasten up the steps of the piazza, and the instant after, old Mr. Clifton entered the parlor, looking very much flurried and alarmed.

"What is the matter? I hope Carolyn is no worse?" asked the lady, anxious, yet calm.

"No! Yes! A great deal better of course since the turn last night! Most malignant form of the disease, and growing rapidly worse every hour. *I tell you it is!* The doctor affirms it!"

Mrs. Clifton gazed at him in a sort of self-possessed perplexity.

"She has got the small-pox, madam."

"The small-pox!"

"Yes, madam, the confluent small-pox, in its worst form."

"You astonish me! I trust—I believe you are mistaken!"

"No—I wish to Heaven I was! No, madam! Doctor's opinion!"

"Why, how on earth. Sit down, Mr. Clifton! Kate, my dear, wheel that arm-chair around."

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Catherine obeyed, and the old gentleman sank among its soft cushions, and took out his pocket-handkerchief and wiped his face.

"How on earth could she have got it?" asked Mrs. Clifton.

"Ah! Lord Almighty knows! Came spontaneously, I do suppose! You noticed those two pimples that appeared upon her forehead after the crisis of her fever passed?"

"Yes; but I thought nothing of them."

"Nor did we at the time. But at any rate, that was the first appearance of the eruption—little as we guessed it at the time. You see, she naturally began to grow better when this other disease began to break out, I suppose. Indeed, I have no doubt it was the coming of the small-pox, that arrested the fatal termination of the brain fever. Well, you see, last night after you had left her so much better, we entrusted her to the care of Zuleime, who did not seem to be so much worn out with watching as the rest of us. So Zuleime sat up with her; and she tells me that before midnight her face was sprinkled all over with those pimples. And this morning, when I first saw her—" The old man's voice broke down for a moment. "Oh! it was dreadful! Her beautiful, fair face, neck, bosom, arms, all covered over with that horrible eruption! It had all run together in one mass. We sent off to hasten the arrival of the doctor, who, when he came, pronounced the disease to be confluent small-pox. Oh, it is horrible! horrible, even if her life be spared! Disfigured for life! What a fate for a woman! I drove Zulieme out of the room against her will—for she, dear, generous girl, wished to stay and tend her sister. Georgia told me at breakfast, that she had just got a letter from her father, who was ill—and that she must have the carriage to go to Richmond. She did not show me the letter, for she made haste and started almost immediately. Everything falls out disastrously at once. Now, what am I to do? I cannot procure a nurse to that disease, for love or money, in this neighborhood. Advise me what to do. The necessity is so urgent!"

Mrs. Clifton was now sitting up, supporting her head upon her hand, and essaying her strength.

"I must go back, and nurse Carolyn myself."

"You! Now, never suppose, my dear sister, that I have been hinting for you to return and finish killing yourself for us! I would not permit it, if you wished it ever so much! I'll lock and bar the doors and windows, to keep you out, first. But think and counsel me as to the best thing to be done. There is no one at home but Zuleime—and even if I were willing she should risk taking the dreadful disease, she is so very young and inexperienced that I should be afraid to trust her sister's safety in her hands. But I am not willing that she should run any risk to *herself*—that's flat. But what's to be done?"

"There is not a servant on your plantation, or on this farm,

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fit to be trusted in such a case. I must go and take care of my daughter myself!"

"D—d if you shall, ma'am! I'll bar my doors and windows against you, first, I tell you! Why, in your weak state it would be suicide!"

The lady maintained her purpose against Mr. Clifton's vehement opposition, and her calm persistence must have conquered, but Kate Kavanagh mildly interposed, by saying—

"Let me go."

"You!" exclaimed Mr. and Mrs. Clifton, in a breath.

"Yes; I am not a bad nurse. I have had considerable experience with sick people."

"But—you've never had the small-pox—you're not the least marked!" said Mr. Clifton.

"No, sir, I have never had that disease!"

"And you are willing to risk taking it?"

"Yes, sir!"

"What! and you a young girl! Ain't you afraid of catching it, and having your face spoiled?"

"Yes, sir, I am afraid of contracting it."

"Why that is plain contradiction of yourself; you say you are willing to risk it, and afraid of catching it. I do not understand you at all."

"Catherine is so simply truthful and straightforward!" said the lady, smiling; "she means that she is perfectly conscious of the extent of the danger of contagion, but that she thinks it her duty to brave it, nevertheless! Is not that it, my dear? But, Catherine, much as we thank you for your generous self-devotion, we must not permit you to think of going. I must do that, for I have had the disease. If you were to persist in your purpose, my dear girl, you would almost certainly get the small-pox, and then your life, or at the very least your beauty, would be sacrified."

"Beauty!—If I had it and were to lose it, dear lady, there is no one to care for it!"

"Yes, *I* should care for it, my Kate," said the lady, putting her arm around the girl's waist, and drawing her closer.

"In fine, my good girl, you shall not go if you are afraid! That's certain!" said Mr. Clifton.

"Oh, sir, that would not interfere with the faithful discharge of my duties as nurse. You had best let me go, and go at once, sir! There is no time to be lost, surely. Is any competent person with Miss Clifton now, sir?"

"No one but a colored woman, and I really *must* hurry back. And, so if you really *do* feel disposed to go, my dear girl,—is she a good nurse, Mrs. Clifton?"

"Excellent, sir! But indeed I do not like her exposing herself in my stead. I should not permit her to do it indeed, if my power seconded my will," added the lady, sinking back fatigued upon her sofa cushions.

Old Mr. Clifton was evidently inclined to accept Kate's ser-

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vices. Mrs. Clifton was obliged to yield,—more to the weakness that overpowered her frame than to the arguments set forth by Catherine. It was settled, then, that Kate should go. And she quickly put on her little straw bonnet and black silk scarf, and entered the gig that the old gentleman borrowed from the lady to convey the girl to Clifton.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DISCIPLINE OF AFFLICTION.

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of wo shall not thee overflow,
For I will be with thee thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply;
The flames shall not hurt thee, I only design,
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine,

PARAPHRASE FROM SCRIPTURE.

THE mansion-house at White Cliffs was all but deserted. The very house-servants, pretty mulatto girls, more afraid of destroying their good looks than losing their lives, had retreated to their own dens, feigning illness as an excuse to keep out of the reach of contagion. Catherine was introduced at once into the sick room. That sick room! What mind can conceive, or what pen *should* describe it. Only those who have nursed a patient through that worst form of the most loathsome pestilence, can realize its revolting horrors. To see any human being looking as the once beautiful Carolyn now looked. Her very features almost obliterated, while —— fill up the pause, you who have seen the horrors of that pest. It was worse than any form of illness—it was worse than death and decay. Disgust almost over-mastered pity, and Catherine turned away, shuddering with sickness of body and soul. Old Mr. Clifton cast one agonized look upon the ruin, and unable to bear the sight, rushed from the room. Catherine turned to her duty. The wretched patient was tossing about in high fever, and tearing her arms and bosom under the intolerable irritation. That work of destruction must be stopped first Catherine knew. Catherine caught her right hand, and it took all her strength to hold that hand, whose flesh seemed as if it would drop off, under the pressure, while she secured it to the bedstead. Then she captured the other dashing, tossing hand, and confined it in the same manner. And then she looked at the state of her own palms. Oh, offensive duty! No wonder, she thought, that the beautiful Georgia had fled to Richmond, and the two pretty house-maids were extremely ill in their attic! Had *she* a wish to follow their example? No—for now all selfish fears were lost in deep compassion for the poor, forsaken wreck of beauty that lay there at her mercy. She returned to her duty. She administered to her patient an opiate, to soothe her restlessness.

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Took a sponge and tepid water, and thoroughly cleansed the surface of the skin, and anointed face, bosom and arms with a fragrant emollient, to allay the intolerable itching. She then released her hands, and laid them easily upon the counterpane. Lastly, she ventilated and darkened the chamber, and took her seat by the bedside, to fan her patient while she slept. And deep was her satisfaction in watching that quiet, refreshing sleep. It is not my intention to lead my reader through the dismal days that followed, in that sick room, until the "secondary fever," the crisis of the disease, came and passed. Catherine nursed her patient tenderly, faithfully, night and day. Carolyn's life was spared, but her peerless beauty was gone for ever. Her luxuriant, fair hair was all lost, and her head was as bald and discolored as her face—and that!

In that darkened chamber, and in the midst of physical suffering and weakness, Carolyn had had no opportunity of ascertaining the extent of the ravages the disease had made in her beauty—if indeed she knew the nature of the former, or thought about the latter. But as she convalesced, and became able to sit up in bed and converse, she felt an invalid's childish curiosity to look in the glass, and frequently requested her gentle nurse to hand her one. But Catherine, dreading the effect of the shock, steadily refused to comply with her wishes in that respect, and perseveringly kept the room darkened. And the sick girl, too weak to persist long in any controversy, yielded the point.

But one day, while Catherine was at her breakfast, and old Darkey supplying her place by the bedside of the patient, Carolyn said in a tone that admitted of no denial, or even delay—

"Darkey, hand me that hand-glass from my dressing-table."

And the old woman impulsively, thoughtlessly obeyed her, and brought it. Carolyn was propped up in bed. She took the mirror, gave one interested look into it—plucked off her little cap—gave another hurried glance—and uttering a long, low cry of despair, sunk back insensible upon her pillow.

Old Darkey flew from the chair to the patient, and from the patient to the bell, in great trepidation—ringing peals that brought all the household hurrying in alarm to the room. Old Mr. Clifton, being nearest at hand, arrived first. And when he saw and understood what had happened, he seized the hand-glass, and threw it out of the window, and laid hold of the heavy toilet mirror, and sent it flying after. Then he drove old Darkey from the room, forbidding her, for a stupid and dangerous maniac, ever to show her face there again. And all this time, Catherine, who had entered so quietly that no one saw or heard her, was silently trying to restore the swooning girl. As Carolyn, with a deep sigh, opened her eyes, Kate motioned for every one to leave the chamber. And all noiselessly withdrew. Carolyn shivered and shuddered se-

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veral times, as she raised her eyes appealingly, despairingly to Catherine, who was bending tenderly over her. Catherine thought it best to answer that silent appeal by speaking at once to the point.

"My dear Miss Clifton, you must not think that your face will continue to look anything like it does now, for it will not, indeed. For though it is very much discolored, it is not much pitted, and the discoloration will wear off in a few days. And as for your hair, Miss Clifton, that will grow out very soon, and be even more beautiful and luxuriant than before, on account of the renewal of the skin—so, dear lady, take comfort and do not look in the glass again until you are better." And all the time that Catherine spoke in this gentle manner, she was bathing the girl's face and hands with bay water, and her tender touch was even more soothing than the sedative liquid. Catherine was almost impelled to say—"Have patience—bow to the will of God, and try to learn the lesson He intends to teach in this." But she felt the hour had not come for speaking such words. That she herself must have patience and wait for the time when she might minister to her spiritual need.

Up to this period, Miss Clifton did not know who her nurse was. She had heard her called "My dear child," or "My good girl," by the physician and by her father, and they were the only visitors to the room, except old Darkey, who came to relieve the nurse at meal times, and who simply called her "Miss." And if once or twice she had heard her called Catherine—still she never imagined her to be Kate Kavanagh, but some hired attendant. And, indeed, in the langour of illness she thought nothing about it. A few days after this, however, when she had grown more composed and resigned, and while she lay watching Catherine's quiet movements through the room, she said—

"My dear, good girl—my gentle nurse—tell me your name? I *do* pray sometimes, and I wish to know your name that I may ask God to bless you for exposing life and health and beauty for one whom mother, and sister, and servants all deserted." Just now, for the first time, it flashed like lightning through Kate's mind that all the danger of infection was over, and that she might now thank God for preserving her from contagion. Yes! she had forgotten herself for some time past, but now her heart leaped for joy and gratitude, and she thanked God before she replied to Miss Clifton's question, and said—

"My name is Catherine Kavanagh."

"So!—you are Kate Kavanagh! Hoist up the blind. Come to me. Let me look at you," said Miss Clifton, rising on her elbow. Smiling, because unconscious of the hidden meaning in her words, Catherine approached and sat down by her bed. And Carolyn took both her hands, and

"Fell to the perusing of her face,
As though she'd learn it off by heart."

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She pored over the broad, square forehead, looking strong, but not beautiful, for all the bright chestnut hair was pushed carelessly aside—she gazed upon those dark gray eyes under their long black fringes—such deep, transparent wells of lips, and then her glance roved over the symmetrical form. And she thought she had never seen so perfect a figure. And she sighed and raised her eyes again to the remarkable countenance, with its large features, pale and cadaverous now with a long season of confinement, fatigue and loss of sleep, and grave with thought, and earnest with deep feeling. And she could not settle it to her satisfaction whether Kate Kavanagh was a sublime beauty or a fright. Upon the whole, the girl interested and pained her. And she continued to hold her hands with a nervous grasp, and pore over her face and form as freely as though she had been only a dreadfully fascinating statue—while Kate blushed under the infliction, and finally drew her hands away and sat down.

But every day Miss Clifton's confidence in, and esteem for Kate Kavanah increased. And every day Catherine sought to draw her patient's soul to the only true source of light, strength and consolation; and to sanctify this terrible affliction to her spirit's good. The obligation to do this pressed upon the girl's conscience heavily, as if it were the hand of God. It was in vain that she said to herself, "I am nothing but a weak, erring girl. It would be presumption in me to speak. It might be received as impertinence, and do more harm than good." Still the answer arose from the depths of her heart, saying—"Speak the fitting words at the fitting time, as they arise within your mind, for they are the inspiration of God's spirit." And wisely, lovingly, reverently, she spoke them as occasion called them forth. The right thing was always said at the moment it was needed. "Words spoken in season are like apples of gold on plates of silver." Many a willing but bungling Christian would have failed to do Carolyn any good, for Miss Clifton was a very difficult subject. There is nothing so hard of impression as pride and scorn and jealousy. It was the dominion of that infernal triumvirate that made Lucifer an impracticable subject among the angels. But Catherine was moved and guided by a higher power than herself. Of herself she dared say nothing on Divine subjects. She only spoke when strongly, irresistibly impelled to do so. And her words were blessed to her patient and sanctified to her own spirit.

Catherine had a powerful coadjutor in her good work. It was the sorrow in Carolyn's heart. And ah, who could sound the depth of that sorrow? Loving as passionately as she had loved! Sinning against that love as cruelly as she had sinned! Punished for her sin as terribly as she was punished! And now ruined and hideous in person, and wrecked and despairing in mind, to whom could she cry in her sharp agony but to God?—her Creator and Father!—Whose arm

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was strong enough to lift her from that horrible pit but God's —but God's? And the All-Powerful, the All-Merciful, was helping her every day.

The great strength, the great vitality of her sorrow, was the thought of Archer Clifton. Could she have hoped for a reconciliation with him, however distant, all else might have been borne. But with that death's head of hers, such joy might never be hoped—ought never to be wished. No, she was as the leper, set apart from human love—at least from conjugal and maternal love—for ever and for ever! This was hard—this was well nigh intolerable!

She would no more grace the saloon with her surpassing loveliness—the pride of her family—the ornament of their house. Her heart would no more swell with exultation, when, on entering the drawing-room, in the full glory of her peerless beauty, she would hear a murmur of admiration pass through the company. No. If she should ever enter a saloon again she would make a tremendous sensation, truly—but it would be one of astonishment, pity, and perhaps disgust. And that thought was dreadful, dreadful to the proud young belle! But oh! it was as nothing to the feeling that her household gods were broken and ruined for ever—that her hopes of domestic happiness were gone for ever! For underneath all the pride and vanity and scorn of the young belle had been the woman's thought, the woman's hope of the coming long, calm days of wife and mother joy. Yea, as surely as under the burnished satin boddice had beat the heart of flesh! But all these were over now; the proud, vain aspirations of the belle, and the woman's deeper, purer hopes! Both crushed by one fell blow! All was lost in the world! Nothing was left but Heaven!

"If God would take
A heart that earth had crushed."

Many are driven by the storms of life to the Heavenly Father's bosom. It is for this that the tempests of sorrow are sent, and the sooner that Divine sanctuary is sought, the better, for hard and harder will beat the storm until its end is answered. And too often all is lost, or seems lost, before we consent to save ourselves. With Carolyn, all the treasures of her youth were gone,—health and beauty, love and hope. Something like this she breathed to Catherine, in a weak despairing mood,—for only in a miserably depressed state of mind and body would the proud girl deign to complain.

"Dear lady, do not say so sadly that 'all is lost—for ever lost.' Dear lady, *nothing is ever lost.* It is impossible. The Lord, in His Divine Wisdom, may withdraw His gifts, but they are not lost—they have gone into His keeping."

"I do not comprehend you! My poor good looks, such as they were, are surely gone for ever. Nothing can restore them! And oh, Catherine! you do not know—you cannot understand all the blessings, the hope, and the joy of my life fled for ever; You are a child—you do not understand it!"

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"Perhaps I do not, lady, and perhaps I *do*! Seek all that you have lost in God! He has withdrawn His gifts, your treasures, that He may draw you to Himself! They are safe in His treasure house. If you have lost the beauty of the fair roseate complexion, He can endow you with a higher beauty, emanating from the soul. If you have lost human love, He can satisfy your soul with the richness and fullness of Divine love that never faileth! And for your broken earthly hopes He can give you the Heavenly hope that never dieth."

"Oh! but it is the lost earthly hope, personal beauty and human love, that were so dear to me! So dear to me!" exclaimed the poor girl, bursting into a passion of tears.

"And He can restore even those! 'But seek ye *first* the Kingdom of Heaven, and all these things shall be added to you."

"Ah, child! *Nothing* but a miracle could give me back dead happiness. And the days of miracles are over!"

"No! no! There is nothing in the Scripture to warrant that saying. The days of miracles are *not* passed, Until the days of human faith and Divine Omnipotence are past—the days of miracles are not passed. Anything that *seems* to me right that I should have, I will pray God—that if it *be* right, He will give it me—though it should appear to my ignorance utterly impossible!" Then Catherine abruptly stopped, fearing that she had said too much. And she silently prayed for a faith that should be as far removed from presumption, as from despair.

Carolyn convalesced very slowly. It was weeks before she left her bed. And then many more weeks before she left her room.

It was a glorious day in Autumn, when she first walked out upon the lawn, supported between Catherine and her father. And as soon as she set foot upon the green sward, some cattle that were browsing there—by some caprice to which cattle are subject—started off as if seized by sudden panic, and ran huddling together confusedly, and precipitating themselves towards the outer gate. And so weak were the poor invalid's nerves, and so morbid her mind, that she burst into tears, and declared that the very brutes fled from before her face, as from one less human than themselves! Nor could any argument of Mr. Clifton's or of Catherine's disabuse her mind of this absurd idea. She begged Catherine to take her back to her chamber. And for many weeks no entreaties could induce her to leave it.

Zuleime came freely to her sister now. She had her harp brought into her room. And she soothed the recluse with music every day. And at last Kate Kavanagh, who had gradually merged from nurse into companion, added her own rich, full-toned voice in accompaniment. The Misses Clifton were both very much surprised to see this "gift of gracious nature" thrown away upon a poor girl, with no hopes or prospects but manual labor for her living. And Zuleime, who

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could be thoughtful and benevolent in the midst of anxiety and sorrow, proposed to give Catherine lessons on the harp. But this was soon stopped. Both Zuleime and Catherine perceived that the music, far from soothing, seemed to irritate the invalid. And for this reason, Carolyn had lost her voice. She could never sing again. And even in speaking, her tones were harsh and rough. The harp was banished, and books were brought. And while Zuleime worked, and Carolyn fondled a little King Charles, that had been bought for the childish invalid, Kate read aloud to the sisters. And now it was that the world of *written* poetry broke upon the maiden's delighted view. Before this, she had never read a line of poetry in her life except hymns—for Mrs. Clifton had judiciously suppressed all books of that nature. But now the treasures of Milton, Goldsmith, and Cowper, were opened to her ardent mind! Oh, those days that followed the convalescence of Miss Clifton—those evenings after Carolyn had gone to rest, when she and Zuleime would go into the summer-saloon and spend the hours in music or poetry, or in talk as musical, and as poetic. Those evenings, spent with a refined, warm-hearted girl like Zuleime—they were unfitting her for her prospective hard life of coarse labor and coarser association. She felt that it was so. And she determined to leave. She only waited until Mr. Clifton went to Richmond and brought back his wife. And then she bade them all good-bye and returned home—not to the farm-house of Hardbargain but to her brother Carl's cabin.

She needed to commune with herself, and be still. She wished to descend into the unsounded abysses of her heart, and examine, though with awe, the mystery of iniquity that in some unguarded hour had germinated there—this growing passion for a man betrothed to another. No matter if the marriage was broken off for the present. They loved each other. And *that* was the true betrothal. As for herself, she would, with the grace of God, turn out this dangerous bosom guest, so divinely fair as to seem like an angel of light rather than the tempting demon that it was! And to do this effectually, she must break every tie that held her to that fair illusive life she had lately led. She must forsake every association connected with her sin and folly. She loved Mrs. Clifton—loved her first for herself alone, and then as the mother of—one whose name she dared not now to breathe even to herself. She enjoyed the congenial society and occupations at White Cliffs and at Hardbargain. And now she was the most welcome visitor on the list of both families. But she must forego the privilege this gave her. More than all, she had enjoyed her pleasant life at Hardbargain. The cheerful housekeeping cares she had shared with its mistress—the conversations over the pleasant tea-table or the social work-stand—the books, the newspapers, and the evening music, and the society of the admirable Mrs. Clifton—these formed the ex-

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ternals, the body of her happiness; but the interior, the soul of her joy, was that *there* was the home of Archer Clifton—the place pervaded by his spirit! redolent of him! But all these *must* be abandoned! They might have affinity for her nature, but they did not belong to her lot in life. And see what they had brought her to! Even to an insane passion for her benefactor! And now it was high time she had come to her senses and self-recollection. She was a poor girl, of the humblest birth —born in poverty and destined to poverty. She must leave off spending evenings with refined and accomplished young ladies in elegant saloons, if she wished to do her duty in that station to which God had called her. And she must give up the society of Archer Clifton's mother, if she wished to forget him. And she must betake herself to the coarse, hard, but dutiful life of her brother's cabin.

Catherine went no more to White Cliffs or to Hardbargain. And when Mrs. Clifton sent for her to come and spend a day, she returned a gentle answer that she could not leave her grandfather.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BLACK SEAL.

Her eyes unmoved, but full and wide,
Not once had turned to either side—
Nor once did those sweet eyelids close,
Or shade the glance on which they rose
But round their orbs of darkest hue,
The circling white dilated grew—
And there with glassy gaze she stood,
As ice were in her curdled blood.—BYRON.

THE evening was chilly—just chilly enough to make the novelty of the first fire of the season a luxury. And so Zuleime had ordered a bright little fire kindled in the parlor, and the tea-table set out there. And she had changed her white muslin dress for a fine crimson poplin one, and began to think of the pleasant autumn evenings, when all the family would gather around the hearth, with needle-work and books and social chat. And, like a child, she was forgetting the threatening dangers that lay before her, and those she loved —her father's trouble, Major Cabell's expected arrival, Frank's peril in distant warfare, the difficulties of her own position—all were for awhile forgotten, in the dream of cheerful fireside affection and comfort, as she moved about the room, closing blinds, dropping curtains, and wheeling easy-chairs up near the fire, and thinking with what a fine smile of genial satisfaction her father would come in and look around upon the change before he dropped himself into that largest easy-chair. Mr. Clifton had ridden to the village, but was expected back to tea. And there sat the tea-table, a little aside, to be clear of the chair, near the fire-place, and radiant with snowy damask and shining silver.

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Carolyn came in, pacing softly, slowly, and turning her eyes around the room with a look of languid approval, she sank into an arm-chair. Zuleime went to her immediately, and relieved her of the large shawl she had worn through the chilly passages, and closed her dressing-gown, and settled the lace border of the delicate little cap, and placed the softest cushion under her feet, and then kissed her forehead, but did not speak. Carolyn repaid her with a silent look of affection. Since the departure of Catherine, Carolyn had sunk into a sort of mute despondency, in spite of all the care and affection of her sister, for it was her moral nature that needed help, and the young Zuleime could not

"Minister to a mind diseased."

Mrs. Georgia Clifton entered, and silently glided to her seat. Unconsciously, Georgia became a dark and terrible picture. She sat upon a low ottoman, at the corner of the fireplace, her head supported by her hand, and all her glittering ringlets falling like a glory down each side of her darkly splendid face. And through that strong light and shadow her form palpitated, her bosom heaved and fell, her moist lips dropped apart, and her eyes gleamed with a set, steady fire, as though some passionate trance wrapt and spell-bound her soul.

Zuleime was moving about the room, and giving directions to a servant, who had brought in cakes and preserves. Finally she sat down, and took out her knitting—it was a pair of white lamb's wool socks, for her father—and knitted while she waited. She had not long to wait.

The door swung open silently, and Mr. Clifton entered, with a newspaper in his hand, but looking so shocked and troubled that all, with one accord, raised their eyes in silent inquiry.

"Poor Frank! poor Frank!" exclaimed the old man, as if he was ready to burst into a passion of tears.

"What!—what of Frank?" asked a faltering, gasping voice, which he could not recognize as belonging to either of the three young women present—yet answered, mechanically,

"Those bloody Redskins! Those ghastly, horrible Savages!" he cried, throwing himself into a chair.

"There—there has been some fighting! Is————Tell me me!—tell me! You know what I want to know. *Is Archer safe?*" exclaimed Carolyn, bending forward. While, sallow and fierce, the eyes of Georgia gleamed the terror and anxiety she dared not express.

"Archer is safe!" said Mr. Clifton.

And the light of a sudden joy flitted across Georgia's dark face,—and Carolyn sank back, with a look of grateful relief. And no one noticed Zuleime. And no one knew that she had spoken.

"Yes! Archer is safe! Thank God! And a thousand times *thank God*, that Archer is safe! But Frank!—poor Frank! My God what a fate! Who shall tell his mother?"

"For Heaven's sake!—what has happened to Mr. Fairfax?" asked Georgia.

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"There! There! Read for yourself," replied the old man, getting up, and handing her the paper. He did not mean that she should read aloud, perhaps—but he forgot—he was confused with trouble.

And she took the paper, and read:—"FROM THE INDIAN FRONTIER; HORRIBLE MASSACRE NEAR FORT PROTECTION.—Dispatches from our Western frontier bring the most painful account of a horrible massacre of a part of our troops by the Indians, in the vicinity of Fort Protection. On Monday, the 15th ultimo, a small reconnoitering party left the Fort, under the command of Lieutenant Fairfax. They had proceeded about a mile on their way, when they fell into an ambuscade of Indians, and were cut to pieces in the most shocking manner. The body of Lieutenant Fairfax, in particular, was so horribly mutilated as to be scarcely recognizable. The full particulars of the massacre, given below, are copied from the 'National Sentinel.'"

Then followed a long account of the catastrophe, with every revolting circumstance detailed with horrid distinctness. The old man heard and groaned at intervals. Carolyn shuddered and wept by turns. And even Georgia's voice broke down for pity and horror. But *she*—the wife—the widow—she—the fearfully bereaved—she sat and listened to all the murderous story. She heard all—all. How he had been set upon by six or seven—how he had singly battled with them, when all his party were lying dead around him—how then he tried to escape such fearful odds—how he was felled, and dragged down from his horse—the young, warm, beating heart was cloven through—the fair hair torn from the bleeding skull—the fingers chopped off for the sake of the ring—Frank wore but one—a simple gold ring, with a coral set, that she had taken from her slender fore finger, and contrived to squeeze past the joint, and get it comfortably upon his little finger. And they had cut it off in their haste to get it. How real that trifle made the whole horror, that might else have seemed like a nightmare! She sat and heard it all—all. And no motion, no tear, no cry escaped her.

At last, when the reading was over, and they were released from the spell of horror, old Mr. Clifton thought of Zuleime, and feared its effect on her. He turned to look at her. At first he saw nothing amiss.

She sat so naturally, though still, with her knitting in her hands, as though only stopped for an instant, and her face turned in a listening attitude toward Georgia, who had ceased to read.

"It is all over—there is no more to hear, Zuleime, my darling," said the old man.

But she did not move or speak. She seemed to look and listen intently.

"Zuleime," said her father, gently.

She remained perfectly still.

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"*Zuleime!*" he exclaimed, in a louder tone. She did not hear.

"ZULEIME!!" he cried, a third time, going towards her, to seize her shoulder.

But he started back in affright. They were all gazing at her now.

"My God! she is DEAD!" ejaculated the father.

"She is MAD!" exclaimed Georgia.

They gathered around her. She knew it not. She sat there as if frozen into that attitude—her face white and hard—her lips bloodless and stiff, and her eyes still fixed towards the spot from which Georgia had been reading, but beyond it—beyond it—into the far distance, as if fascinated by some spectacle there of unutterable horror!

"Zuleime! what are your looking at? Speak to me, my child!" cried her father, in great distress.

He might as well have expected a statue to speak.

Carolyn took the knitting away, which, through all this, had dangled between her stiff, unconscious fingers. Georgia rubbed her hands. Carolyn bathed her face. The old man cried to her—all in vain! They might as well have performed these offices for the dead.

They lifted her up, and laid her on a sofa—her limbs hanging helplessly, like those of a dead or swooning girl. But she was neither dead nor swooning. Wherever they moved her, her eyes were still fixed, in that bright, burning, horrible stare, upon the distance, as though the vision of the ghastly spectacle that had been conjured up before her imagination, followed her wherever she was turned.

They took her up stairs, undressed and put her to bed. All night long she lay in the same state.

In the morning there was no change, except that the muscles of the face had fallen, the cheeks sunken, the chin dropped, and that concentrated, intense gaze into vacancy, was more burning bright than ever. It was as though a burning soul was consuming the unconscious flesh to death. Or as if a body was turning to dust and ashes with the spirit still imprisoned in it.

"She is sinking, and must die, unless she can be moved to tears," said the doctor.

But what should move her to tears? Was there anything on earth that she could weep for now? Her old gray father had knelt, weeping, by her bedside, and torn his silver hair in anguish, without causing a single eyelash to quiver over that fixed, burning eye! What should make her weep? Plaintive music? She could not be made to hear it! The sound was drowned in the groans from that scene of blood!

Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain, had come over, but though she was a woman of great skill and experience, all her efforts failed to rouse the girl from that fearful trance, which seemed likely to end in death.

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"Send for Catherine! If any one in the world can do her good now, it will be Catherine. There is, besides, a Free-Masonry between girls of the same age, that makes them instinctively understand each other. If a child were in a stupor, I should certainly send its favorite playmate—another child—as the most likely being to rouse it," said Mrs. Clifton.

"Ah! My Lord!—this is worse than any stupor! I wish to Heaven she would fall into a stupor," replied the father.

"I know it! For her mind is not dulled, but seems wrought up to the highest pitch, and intent upon some imaginary vision of horror. She must be brought out of it. She must be subdued. Send for Catherine."

Mr. Clifton went himself in the gig, to bring the kind girl.

When Catherine arrived, and while she stood by the side of the stricken, insensible girl, Mr. Clifton said to her—

"You see, my dear child Zuleime seems to have been very much attached to this poor young man. And the news of his horrid death was broken to her suddenly, and it has just thrown her into this state! Look at her eyes! What do you think they see—in imagination, I mean?"

"They see that scene of the massacre—they see the death of her lover," said Kate, looking piteously at her friend—(for Zuleime *was* her friend)—and brooding deeply over some idea.

"The doctor says she must die if she cannot be made to weep! Oh, Katey, my dear, *dear* girl! If you can *only* make her weep! I will give you—I was going to say—I would give you half of all I have in the world! Come, try! That's a good girl! You girls all know each other's little fool-secrets and love nonsenses. Come, try. Do you want to be left alone with her?"

Kate shook her head in that quick way usual to her when strong feeling kept her silent—but she added—

"Give me her keys."

The old man seemed surprised, but looked about and discovered the required articles in her little work-basket, and handed them to Kate.

"I only want to search and see if I cannot find something that was his—some little token or keepsake, you know."

The old man took his station at the foot of the bed, while Kate pursued her search. She knew what she was looking for, it was a curl of fair hair. She had caught a glimpse of it once—when Zuleime had opened a box in her drawer, and had immediately shut it again with a deep blush. And now she knew whose hair it was; and that the sight of it would bring tears to those burning eye-balls, and consciousness to that frenzied brain. She found it. She could have wept herself as she raised it from its little hiding place. She took it to the bedside—put her hand gently over those glaring eyes to darken them, and break the spell if possible, and then lifting her

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hand off again, she held up the lock of air by the end, letting it drop into a fair shining ringlet before the eyes of the girl, as she said—

"Zuleime, do you know whose hair this is?"

The poor scathed eye-balls fixed upon it—softened—melted from their searching glare—a change came over her face—she extended her hand, and caught the tress as if fearing to lose it, and pressed it with both hands to her heart. Then her bosom began to heave convulsively, as with a great coming agony. Catherine caught her up, for she seemed about to suffocate. It was only the coming of the flood of tears—yes, the *flood*, for she fell upon Catherine's sustaining bosom, and sobbed and wept—such a deluge of tears, that the girl's dress was dripping wet, and it grew a wonder where so much came from. And Catherine's heart was smitten, and she wept, too—wept till she grew so weak she could scarcely sustain her burthen. And then old Mr. Clifton came around and relieved her, taking Zuleime into his arms and laying her head against his shoulder, saying—

"There, cry! Cry on its father's neck, as much as it wants to! It shall cry its fill, poor thing! poor little heart-broken thing!"

And she *did*, abundantly!—but pressed and kissed her father's neck the while for his tender words. This melted down the old man's heart so that he said—

"They shan't plague you! None of them shall! Charley Cabell shan't come here to trouble you! *That* he shan't. *Come what will*, you shan't be forced to marry him! No, no, my darling—my poor little heart-broken darling, you shan't! I'll see him in perdition first! And myself, too! There, don't stop! Cry it all out on father's neck! Don't stop! Catch your breath and begin again! That's right! That's a good girl! Oh, she'll cry a plenty this bout. Once I couldn't bear to hear women cry! It was because I did not know that if the grief was not cried out, it would stay in the heart and burst it! I will never try to stop a woman from crying again. Cry on, my poor little thing!" And so most tenderly, but half-childishly, the old man talked, and petted, and cooed over her.

Catherine slipped down stairs to prepare tea and toast.

When she came back, she found Zuleime lying back upon the pillow exhausted, but composed, and still pressing the little lock of hair. Catherine set down the little waiter, and took a bowl and napkin and washed her face with cologne and water, and then brought the cup of tea.

Zuleime shook her head mournfully.

Catherine stooped and whispered.

"For your father's sake, dear. Look at him."

Zuleime raised her eyes to the old man's grief-worn, anxious face, and then extended her hand for the cup, and drank the tea.

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While Zuleime was resting in Catherine's arms and drinking the tea, a knock was heard at the door, and when Mr. Clifton opened it, a servant appeared and told him that Major Cabell had arrived, and wished to speak with him.

And the old gentleman set his teeth, and immediately went below.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. CLIFTON'S RESOLUTION.

Full many a storm on this gray head has beat,
And now on my high station do I stand,
Like the tired watchman in rocked tower,
Who looketh for the hour of his release.
I'm sick of worldly broil, and fain would be
With those who strive no more.—JOANNA BAILLIE.

"WELL, old two pence ha'penny, how d' y' do? Family all well at last, eh?" said Major Cabell, advancing to meet Mr. Clifton, as he entered the parlor.

The old gentleman extended his hand gravely, and welcomed his visitor to White Cliffs. Then he rung the bell and ordered refreshments, but Major Cabell declined the latter, and inquired after the ladies.

"My family are all in affliction! D—n it, Charley, you know it! Curse that Indian war! My dear Carolyn scarcely recovered from the effects of that loathsome pestilence, before here comes the news of that hideous massacre of poor Fairfax and his men, and just overwhelms my little Zuleime!"

"Zuleime? My dear little wife? I trust that nothing has been permitted to afflict *her*?"

"The news of Fairfax's horrible death shocked her into a sort of appalled ecstacy, which lasted for twelve hours! And from which she was only roused to break into such tears and sobs, as I never heard before, and hope never to hear again."

The old man wished to prepare Major Cabell, gradually, for the announcement he intended to make of the marriage about to be broken off. He wished to touch his heart, to excite his sympathy, to awaken his generosity. He even hoped—for people will have wild hopes in extremity—that Major Cabell might anticipate his wish, and resign his claims. He never was more mistaken in his life!

Major Cabell listened in grave silence to his speech, and then in high displeasure, exclaimed—

"By my soul, sir! this is a very astonishing and most offensive thing, you tell me! Why should Zuleime grieve thus immoderately over the death of this young officer. Will you explain that?"

"Yes! I *might* say—because he was her intimate companion in her own home all the summer—and was soon after leaving it, so barbarously slaughtered. That is quite a sufficient reason for the tender-hearted child to grieve excessively. But I will not deceive you, Major Cabell. She loved this poor young man!"

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"Sir! Mr. Clifton! By Heaven, sir!"

"It cannot be helped, Charley! Hearts cannot be bound by parchment and red tape! She loved this poor Frank Fairfax—and her heart is broken by his sudden, dreadful loss. Her grief, poor thing, must have its way! She shall not be troubled!"

"And pray, sir," began Major Cabell, speaking with deliberate scorn—"how long shall this faithless girl be permitted to weep over the memory of that fellow, before she is required to give her hand to one who might have claimed it as his right long ago?"

"*Charles Cabell*," said the old man, speaking slowly and sadly, "is it *possible* that you *can*—that *any* man could wish to marry a broken-hearted girl, mourning over the grave of her freshly murdered lover!"

"*Wish* to marry her? Wish to marry Zuleime? Give her to me! Give me Zuleime! Only give her to me, and then see! She is my right! I claim her by your promise—and I would take her *now!*"

"But you are certainly mad! You would be miserable with her!"

"*Should I?* That is my affair! Only give her to me! Come! let me have her to-day, or to-morrow, and I will take her home to Richmond with me," said Major Cabell vehemently, almost fiercely.

Old Mr. Clifton looked up at him in surprise, amounting almost to fear.

Have I ever described Major Cabell to you? He was a small man, with clear cut, sharpened features, and pale face, surrounded by light brown hair and whiskers, with very handsome dark brown eyes, but with a certain latent ferocity in the eyes, and grimness about the thin, set lips. Somehow or other he irresistibly reminded you of a hyena—especially when he happened to laugh that thin, ungenial laugh.

The old man looked at him in surprise, almost amounting to fear, and then he said—

"But she does not love you *now!* She cannot love you *yet!* She loves Frank in his shroud better than any one left alive!"

"I do not care! She must forget Frank, and love me! Women can be made to feel or feign anything, by one who understands them."

"But her heart is breaking, I tell you!"

"It must stop breaking, and nerve itself to life."

"She is weeping her life away! She is a Niobe, I tell you! A living fountain of tears!"

"She shall dry them and smile! See if I do not make her do it! Pooh! it is baby love, all this! Do you think a girl of her age, can feel any lasting love, or grief, or enduring passion of any sort at all? Pooh, pooh! I tell you if her lap-dog were killed, she would blubber and weep as much

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over its death, as she does over this other puppy's fate! But, once for all, Mr. Clifton, I tell you I do not intend to be put off, or in any way annoyed by this girl's grief and petulance. It is not well for you, her, or myself, that it should be indulged. Give her to me at once, according to your promise, and afterward I shall know how to deal with her—far better than you seem to know."

"And you really wish to marry her in her present state, and take her home with you?"

"Yes! What objection? A wedding-party is not an indispensable accessory to the ceremony. A bridal journey from here to Richmond would be a very good substitute. Indeed, since the catastrophe of the last wedding-party at Clifton, I think the bridal journey would be in the best taste."

"Umph! And you would marry her so, and so take her away?"

"Certainly."

"*Brute!*"

"Sir?"

"BRUTE, I say! She would rather lie down with Frank in his bloody grave than marry you! And I would rather lay my child there—ALIVE—than give her to you! There! it is said! Now, I hope you understand me?"

Major Cabell brought his two fierce brown eyes to bear upon Mr. Old Gentleman, and gazed as if he thought him bereft of his senses. Then he spoke in a peculiarly thin, smooth, distinct voice—

"Do you mean what you say, sir?"

"Yes I do! There!"

"And have you duly considered this, sir?"

"Yes I have! There!"

"And you know and are prepared to meet the consequences?"

"Yes! Do your worst! There!" said the old man, setting down his foot.

Major Cabell arose and walked up and down the floor in deep, perplexed thought. To say that he was surprised at this sudden, unexpected rebellion and daring on the part of Mr. Clifton would not be sufficient. He was just *astounded*, and could not surmise where the strength of the old man to oppose him, with his claims and his power, could come from! He thought some external aid had been given! He never guessed that it was the internal victory of conscience over cowardice.

Old Mr. Clifton also arose and stretched himself, expanding his chest, and taking a long, deep breath of intense relief and satisfaction, saying—

"Thank Heaven, I feel better. Feel more like a man than I have felt for ten years. Now let the worst come, I can meet it!"

Major Cabell glanced sideways at him, and continued his

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thoughtful pacing up and down the floor. He was possessed with a sort of ferocious passion for Zuleime, a passion fanned to fury by opposition. He was not one to bend his pride to sue. And yet he must have her! Soon, too!

Old Mr. Clifton, now feeling and looking so much better and franker, and remembering that Major Cabell was his guest as well as his relative, went up to him and held out his hand, saying, heartily—

"Charley, give me your hand! I do not know what you are going to do, but I know that I am ready to meet what comes! In olden times mortal foes shook hands before they entered upon a deadly combat. In our times the executioner and his victim exchange courtesies. And the humanity of it is a touching comment upon the cruel necessities of our legal and social code. Let us not be more ungracious adversaries than they. Give me your hand. You are welcome to Clifton as long as you please to give us your company. Sport is good now on the mountains, and you can amuse yourself as you please."

Major Cabell paused in his walk, and placed his hand in the open palm of Mr. Clifton, saying—

"I will take you at your word, sir! I will remain your guest for a few days. I will hope that what you have said in regard to the marriage of myself and your daughter, has been spoken in haste, and under the influence of anger. I trust that you will review your words. To-day you speak from excitement—to-morrow I hope that judgment will dictate your reply. You will remember that *I, too*, had something to complain of in the fact that my affianced bride, or one that I considered such, should have been so ill guided, or so illy guided herself, as to suffer her affections to fall into this entanglement. But we will say no more about it now, for I see Mrs. Clifton about to enter."

Georgia entered indeed, smiling.

Old Mr. Clifton seized the opportunity, and while Major Cabell was paying his devoirs to the beauty, excused himself and left the room to go and see how Zuleime was getting on, and to reassure her if necessary.

As soon as he had left the room, Georgia drew Major Cabell off to a distant sofa. And they sat down and entered upon a long, confidential conversation. And when it was ended, they arose and separated with looks of great satisfaction.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE WIDOWED BRIDE.

Her look composed, and steady eye,
Bespoke a matchless constancy,
And there she sat, so calm and pale,
That but her breathing did not fail,
And motion slight of eye and head,
And of her bosom warranted
That neither sense nor pulse she lacks,
You might have thought a form of wax,
Wrought to the very life was there,
So still she was, so pale, so fair.—SCOTT.

A FEW days after the incidents recorded in the last chapter, Mrs. Georgia Clifton entered Zuleime's room. The poor girl was sitting in an arm-chair near the window, idle, as was never her habit before, with her hands lying languidly one over the other, and her eyes fixed upon vacancy.

The beauty went to her with her soft, winning way, and took her hand, and stole her arm over her shoulder, and said, tenderly—

"Zuleime, my love, do not sit here by this open window. Let me close it, and lead you to the sofa."

There is nothing so quiet as despair, except death. There is nothing so docile as despair often is. The beauty knew this by a Satanic inspiration, and calculated on it. Zuleime suffered herself to be led to the sofa, which was wheeled up near the fire, as she would have permitted herself to be led any where else. Georgia sat down by her side, and passed her arm around her waist, and said—

"My dear, I think you love your old father—do you not?"

The poor girl raised her eyes mournfully to the lady's face, as if she did not understand.

"You love your father. You would not be willing to see him ruined in fortune, and degraded in honor, would you?"

Still Zuleime kept her eyes fixed upon the speaker, with an expression of hopeless imbecility.

"My dear child, let me be explicit. And try to understand me, Zuleime. It is of vital necessity to your father that you should. Will you listen to me, Zuleime?"

"Yes," said the mourner, mechanically, without removing her gaze.

"Well, then, you know your grandmother left you thirty thousand dollars? Well. Your father owes debts amounting to twenty-five thousand dollars, and is in danger of an execution or a prison, every day! You would willingly give him your fortune to pay his debts with, we know. But, unfortunately, you cannot do it, because you are not of age. Neither can your father appropriate it, of course. But if you were to marry, then your husband would be in legal possession of that property, and could dispose of it. Now, Major Cabell has bought up your father's notes to the amount of

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eighteen thousand dollars, using all his available funds, for the purpose of saving him from great distress, and in the expectation of marrying *you*, his daughter, and obtaining your little fortune, which would replenish his coffers again. Now, Zuleime, Major Cabell is himself pressed for money. He would not, of course, come down upon your father with an execution, but he will be compelled to sell those notes again for whatever he can get for them. And then of course the purchaser—some Jew or broker, would have no such scruples, but would levy on all the personal property of his debtor, and most likely throw him into prison, where he might languish for years—where he might die! Zuleime! you will not suffer this, if you can prevent it, will you? Speak to me, my love! I do not believe you understand me now! Why don't you answer me, Zuleime!"

"I—I don't know. Yes I do. It was about a—about a—about somebody's going to prison. Was it the murderer? Alas, that will not bring him back. Neither do I wish it. Not even *I*, who loved him so. I would not make any body suffer, for the world. Oh, no."

The beauty looked at the pale girl in deep perplexity a moment, and then said—

"Zuleime, your *father* is suffering! Let's see if that will rouse you!"

"My father? Oh, no, he mustn't. Tell him not to mind it. *I* do not, much, now. I know he is at rest. And we shall be, soon. Tell him not to mind it."

"Zuleime! Awake! Arouse yourself! Your father is in *danger*, I tell you!"

"In danger—in danger. Tell me about it."

"Listen to me, then! Rouse your mind! and fix it upon what I am going to tell you about your father's peril."

And the lady took her hands and looked into her eyes, watching their expression, and bringing back her wandering ideas every time they showed the least sign of flying, and rousing up her flagging intellect every time it betrayed a disposition to sink—and so repeated the whole history of the difficulty over again. But the distracted mind of the poor girl was scarcely able to follow the pains-taking narrator through the facts of the case. Passing her hand once or twice across her corrugated brow, she said—

"What—what is it you say about father, and prisons, and Major Cabell? I—I am afraid my memory isn't as good as it used to be—please tell me over again."

The beauty, with a shrug of her shoulders, reiterated the story, placing it in the fewest, simplest, and most direct words she could find. But the stricken girl only looked sorely distressed and perplexed, and said, plaintively—

"Please forgive me, and tell me what it is that threatens father!"

"An execution—that will sweep off all the furniture from

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the house, and all the negroes from the plantation; parting husbands and wives, and parents and children, and brothers and sisters, among those poor, faithful creatures who love you so well. And for your father's person, a jail, where he may be for years, or until he dies."

"Oh, pray don't talk to me any more, my head is so wild, so wandering, *it wants to go back to something*," said the poor thing, pressing her temples, and strongly attracted to her one great woe.

"But your father!"

"Yes! Oh, only tell me what you want me to do!"

"To marry Major Cabell, who will then have the disposal of your fortune, and can cover those notes and save your father."

"But—oh, yes! Now I remember. Father said there was no necessity! I needn't do it!" said the girl, pressing her finger hard upon the centre of her forehead, and looking keen and old with the mental effort to bring memory, attention and understanding to bear upon the subject. "Yes, yes, yes, yes,—he said I would weep in peace."

"Yes, your poor old father loves you better than himself. And he said that sooner than you should marry a man you did not love, he would die in jail."

"Did he? My dear good father! Oh, yes! now I think of it, it *was* something like that, sure enough! Only my head is *so* queer! He must not go to jail—oh, never!"

"He *must*, unless you marry Major Cabell, and save him."

"Well, I can marry Major Cabell—it don't matter much—do you think it does? Spirits up in Heaven know *nothing* of what is going on on earth, or they know *all* about it, and either is better than our deceptive half-knowledge. If spirits know anything, they will know *our* spirit. Dear Frank will know—will know my spirit—nay, he does! I feel sure of it at this moment. I will marry Major Cabell."

"But, Zuleime, if your father thinks you dislike Major Cabell, he will not permit you to marry him."

"But I don't dislike Major Cabell. I don't dislike any one. I could not now. It seems to me that I feel sorry for every one. I pity every one. Every one has so much trouble, mamma! Mamma, I feel sorry for *you*. I do not know how it is, but I *do* feel *very* sorry for you. Have you any trouble? You must have. Well, let God do as He pleases with you, because He knows best. Besides, it is only for a little while. And it will all come right. Kiss me, mamma! I don't think I loved you well enough when you first came here a stranger. Never mind, I will try to love you more in the future."

Georgia let the poor girl kiss her, and then arose and made an excuse to go. Zuleime was weakening all her purposes. And she was obliged to escape as people fly sometimes from a sermon.

"Please send Kate to me, mamma," said Zuleime.

And very soon Catherine entered.

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"Dear Kate! please come and comb and curl my hair, and put on my crimson dress, and make me decent and pretty to go down into the parlor to see Cousin Charles. It don't matter, you know, Kate. Frank knows all about it. He thinks, so, *too*. Because he sees my heart is breaking all the faster for it, and that I shall the sooner be with him. You see, Kate, it is the heart-strings that hold the soul down to the body, and when they snap—there! It is off—it is gone like a balloon, —when the cord is cut it ascends to Heaven! *I* feel light like that sometimes, as if only one little thread kept my soul down, and if it were to snap, I could go."

Catherine looked at the mourner in deep trouble. Then she began to take down her hair and comb its long sable tresses out, because she knew that in itself to be a soothing process. And she stood and combed and brushed it a long time, and then put it up, and bathed her face and hands.

"Now, my crimson dress," said Zuleime, quietly.

Catherine sat down by her side, and embracing her affectionately, said—

"Dear Zuleime, you are not quite well enough to go down into the parlor; and, besides, Major Cabell is not here. He is gone with some gentleman upon the mountain to shoot birds."

Zuleime sat silent for a long time, enveloped by Catherine's arms, and leaning upon her shoulders. At last Kate whispered,

"Dear Zuleime, confide in me, and relieve your overburdened bosom. A secret is so hard to keep alone in a sorrowful breast. Lay yours on my heart, Zuleime, and it shall be safer there than my own life. Tell me—what tie is it that binds you to Frank?"

"Hush, oh, hush!"

"Tell me, darling—you know it is not from curiosity I ask—it is that I wish you to relieve your heart."

"Hush! I promised him not to tell."

"Death absolves you from that promise. A painful secret is very hard to keep alone. *I* know it, dearest for *I*, too, have a secret. Now will you trust me?"

"Hush! hush! It was his last request—I must comply with it!" said the girl, with wild eyes.

Catherine knelt down before her, clasped her arms around her, and partly to win her confidence, and partly to draw her mind from dwelling upon the woe that was crazing her said:

"Zuleime, look at me. I am going to tell you my secret, that which it will pain and humble my heart to tell!—that which it makes my cheek burn now only to think of! Zuleime, I love a man who never sought, and who would despise my love! And with whom it is for ever and for ever impossible that I should marry. Yet I love him so much—so much, that my heart is ready to burst with its powerless longing to do him some good! Zuleime, I would give him myself—(nay, never mind my cheek burning—I will speak in spite of its protest)—or any dearest faculty or possession of mine, if

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it only could increase his happiness. Zuleime, there is a richness and fullness of joy in sacrificing one's self for one we love that passes all understanding."

"I know there is," breathed the mourner, looking down in her face seriously.

"That is the joy that I long for. And oh, believe me, I would sacrifice myself or any possession or faculty I have, if it would only add to his happiness or power. Eyesight is a precious treasure, is it not? If I could give mine to him, and endow him with perfect vision down to deep old age, I would consent to be dark for ever. The power of speech is a great gift—if by the loss of mine I could endow him with irresistible eloquence, I would be dumb for ever. *He* thinks, Zuleime, that I have talent. And sometimes I think—but I don't know, either! Anyhow, if by yielding *all* mine I could add a mite to the treasures of his intellect, I would be willing to be a fool for life. In a word—if by abdicating all my being, I could add to the largeness of his life, I would glow with joy to do it."

"Do not love him so! He will die if you do! *I know it!* Frank died!"

"And yet, Zuleime, it is not that I wish to *lose* my being, but to *add* to it. I do not know why it is, but I feel—not like an individual, independent existence, but like the complement of that other existence—a half life—not full and complete of itself, waiting to be joined to the other half."

"He will love you. He will find you out," said Zuleime. And her words, and tone, and look thrilled like a prophecy to the heart of Catherine, but she shook her head gravely, and answered—

"Never, Zuleime! It would be a sin even to hope it!—— But, Zuleime, I have laid my secret on your heart—*now* will you confide in me?"

"Oh, Kate! I would do it. I *wish* to do it! But I promised him!"

"Dear Zuleime, when he required that of you, he did not think what might, what has happened. You must tell me, Zuleime. For if you have not some one with whom you can talk freely, you—*I fear for you.* You cannot bear your burden alone! Few human beings can! Tell me, darling?"

"Oh, Kate! It was the last thing he asked me! I must comply with his wish!"

"Zuleime! I am about to cast away all reserve! I am about to tell you the name of him I love so madly. It is Archer Clifton, your cousin—your sister's betrothed! There! I have thrown open the very sanctuary of my heart to you. I have shown its secret sin and shame! Now, will you confide in me!"

"Dear Kate! Dearest Kate! My own secret's without reserve, but not another's."

Catherine arose and took the seat by the mourner's side,

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Well would it have been for Zuleime in after life, if she could now have made a confidante as well as friend of the excellent girl. But at least Catherine's efforts had not been all in vain. The mind of the mourner was a little more rational—her part in conversation not quite so *distrait*. Presently Zuleime said—

"It is getting towards evening. Cousin Charles will be back to supper. Curl my hair, Kate! and put on my crimson dress, I *must* go down and spend the evening with them in the parlor! I must, Kate. It is for my dear father's sake! You do not know, Kate, else *you* would also advise it."

Catherine essayed to prevent her, but finding her quite determined, yielded the point, and assisted her to dress. When her toilet was complete, she sat down again upon the sofa, and put her hand to her head in troubled thought. Then at last she spoke, saying—

"Kate! I am afraid. It seems to me that—that my head has not been quite right. And—and my speech has not been quite to the point. Kate, I want you to tell me—can I trust myself to talk, do you think? or had I better not try this evening? They might think me crazy if I should not talk straight! But I am not! I am not crazy—only—Tell me how I am, and what I had better do, dear Kate?"

"Try to attend and be interested in what is going on, dearest, and talk when occasion presents itself. And do not be afraid. Every one will understand it is only nervousness, darling."

"You encourage me, Catherine," said the poor girl, "and now just give me your hand down stairs."

Kate complied with her request.

The parlor was empty when they entered, and Zuleime had an opportunity of settling herself in a large arm-chair, and composing herself before any one came in. Mr. Clifton, Major Cabell, and several other gentlemen returned from the shooting excursion and entered the parlor together. Mr. Clifton looked surprised and pleased to see Zuleime "clothed and in her right mind;" and Major Cabell seemed interested and curious. Zuleime arose, and supported herself by resting one hand upon the arm of the chair, while she received the greetings of her father's guests. And thanks to the shadowing of the black lustrous curls, and the reflection of the crimson dress, none could see the wanness of her face. Mrs. Clifton and Miss Clifton entered soon after, and in the general conversation that ensued, poor Zuleime escaped particular notice. Once Major Cabell contrived, without drawing attention upon himself, to find his way to her side, and enter into conversation with her. And he was surprised, perplexed, nonplussed at the gentleness and almost tenderness of her manner. Before leaving her he asked—

"When can I have an interview with you, Zuleime?"

"Whenever you please, Cousin Charles," she answered, gently.

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At parting, he pressed her hand, and to his surprise, the pressure was softly returned. And he left her, thinking "the sex" more of a riddle than he ever thought it before.

The next day about noon, Major Cabell and Zuleime met in the saloon, and had an interview of nearly an hour's length.

When Zuleime left him and came out, she met her father in the hall. Taking his hands in hers, she looked up in his troubled face and said—

"Dear father! you remember many weeks ago, you asked me to fix the day when I should be married to Cousin Charles?"

"Never mind, never mind, my dear. That is all over now! You shall not be troubled, my love!"

"Dear father, I have just told Cousin Charles that I will give him my hand on Tuesday fortnight," said Zuleime, and pressing both the old man's hands to her lips, she turned and left him standing there in speechless astonishment, while she went up stairs—and throwing herself upon her knees by her bed, buried her face in the clothes, and breathed—"It won't be for long, Frank! Oh! Frank, you know it won't be for long!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE YOUNG MOURNER.

Mine after life? What is mine after life?
My day is closed. The gloom of night comes on,
A hopeless darkness settles o'er my fate.—JOANNA BAILLIE.

THERE is no state of mind so calm as that of hopelessness. And, therefore, there is none so often mistaken for resignation. Zuleime's cheeks were pale and hollow, her eyes heavy and sunken, and surrounded by a dark, livid circle—and she had contracted an unconscious habit of pressing her hand tightly over her heart, while a look of pain corrugated her brow. Yet, withal, she moved through the house very quietly—without a sigh or a tear—yea, even with a *smile* for whom she chanced to meet—a wan smile of tenderness, fellow-feeling. For the grief that had come to her own young heart, had revealed to her the secret of a general sorrow, and awakened a deep human sympathy. Yet perhaps it was a morbid excess of this feeling that made her see, in every one she met, a fellow-sufferer. Her father misunderstood her serenity and her sweet smile. And his wife led him into the misunderstanding.

"It is a merciful provision of Heaven, that young people of her tender age, can feel no lasting grief. At first, over any misfortune they lament excessively. But it is very soon forgotten," said Georgia.

"Ah, yes! Charley Cabell said something like the same thing, and, indeed, it seems to be true," replied Mr. Clifton.

We are easily persuaded to believe that which we wish to credit. And so the old gentleman believed in the correctness of his wife's judgment, and in the reality of his daughter's peace.

Major Cabell was baffled and perplexed. "Jealousy is as

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cruel as the grave," and so, also, is that base passion which often goes by the holy name of Love. It had been under the influence of both of these that Charles Cabell had sworn to punish Zuleime severely for what he called her faithlessness. But for the present, at least, he was completely frustrated. There was nothing to complain of in her conduct to him. She was very kind and gentle—not with the gentleness of meekness and humility, but with that of a compassionate toleration—such as an angel might feel in looking down upon a determined sinner—seeing his moral insanity, and foreseeing his consequent wretchedness. Major Cabell had frequently heard of mourners who could not bear to hear the names of their beloved, lamented dead, spoken before them. And he thought to torture her bosom by frequently reverting to "that horrible massacre," and "poor Frank." But he could not add one pang to those she had already endured. Her sorrow was too deep to be probed—to be *touched* by a superficial hand like his. She could bear to listen and reply when he talked of her massacred love. For like a stationary panorama of the past and the present, his life and death were ever before her mind. She could converse, without new emotion, of him over whose fate, in its deepest, darkest horrors, she was ever brooding. If any mourners cannot brook to hear the name of the lost mentioned in their presence, it is because they are already blessed with long seasons of forgetfulness, and shrink from the pain of remembrance. She had no such pang of sudden recollection to dread. His memory—her sorrow—was ever present with her.

Catherine watched her with deep and painful interest. She sought an opportunity, and once more had a serious conversation with her.

"Zuleime, *don't* marry under present circumstances. If, as you say, your father is in the power of Major Cabell, it is bad. But if you marry him to deliver your father, it will be worse, and will not eventuate in any good. And two wrongs never make a right, Zuleime. Do no wrong, dearest, but trust in God for deliverance," said Catherine, earnestly.

"It seems to me that I am doing right. It will please Cousin Charles, and save father. And as for myself—it *can't* matter much, you know," replied the despairing girl. And in this view of the case she adhered, with all the tenacity of a morbid resolution.

A few days after this Catherine returned to her brother's cabin, wondering what new misfortune would—against her fixed determination—throw her back among the Cliftons.

Major Cabell had written to Richmond for his mother and sisters to come down and be present at his marriage. And one day, near the last of the week, the carriage of Mrs. Cabell rolled up to the door. Knowing nothing whatsoever of Zuleime's attachment to the young soldier, and consequent deep grief at his fate, they were very much shocked to see her

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looking so ill, but quietly ascribed it to fatigue and anxiety in nursing Carolyn. And Mrs. Cabell was emphatic in demonstrations of motherly kindness, which the gentle girl acknowledged with grateful smiles, and by such attentions as she had the power to bestow. The city ladies had made a short stage that day, and were but little wearied, so that after a little slumber, and the refreshment of the bath, and of tea, they felt well enough to spend the evening in the parlor.

The family were all around the evening fire, when Mrs. Cabell and her daughters entered.

Major Cabell—who was as usual sitting by Zuleime, with his arm over the back of her chair in a property-holding sort of manner—arose and handing his mother to a seat, received from her hand a roll of papers.

"It is some new music, my son, for the dear girls. There are some beautiful songs of Moore's just published. Carolyn, love, I have thirsted to hear your sweet voice again. Will you sing?"

Miss Clifton's eyes filled with tears, and she turned away her head.

Zuleime stole to her aunt's side, and while seeming to examine the music, whispered—

"Dear Aunt Cabell, Carolyn has entirely lost her voice!"

The lady was very much shocked to hear it, and grieved at her own unfortunate proposition, but durst not trust herself to reply, lest Carolyn should hear and understand the subject of their conversation.

Major Cabell, who was turning over the music, suddenly had his gaze fixed by one particular piece. His eyes lighted up with a peculiar satisfaction, and turning to Zuleime, he said—

"My own, you can read music at sight. Can you not?"

"Yes," replied the girl.

"And you can sing and play at sight—can you not?"

"Yes, if it is not too difficult."

"Is this difficult?" he asked, holding a page out to her.

"No, that is very simple," said Zuleime, looking entirely at the music—not at the words.

"It *is* a ballad of Thomas Moore's. I wish you to sing it for us. Will you?"

"Certainly."

"Come, then," he said, and took her hand, and led her to the piano. He seated her, and laid the song before her saying to himself, "If she can sing *that* through without emotion—ay, or *with* emotion—if she can get through it at all—she can do, or suffer anything! She is a heroine."

Zuleime was reading over the words, preparatory to singing them.

And he was watching her intently. But she read through the song, turning the leaves calmly, her pale cheek never changing its hue. Then she restored the first page to its place

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before her, and began to play the prelude. The ladies and old Mr. Clifton drew near, and gathered around her. Then her voice arose, soft, clear and plaintive, but unfaltering as her cheeks remained unchanging—though her father trembled for her as the words of the song fell on his ear. That song was "The Broken Heart," by Thomas Moore. Zuleime sang—

She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps,
And lovers around her are sighing,
But coldly she turns from their gaze and weeps,
For her heart in his grave is lying.
She sings the wild songs of her dear native plains,
Every note which he loved awaking:
Ah! little they think, who delight in her strains,
How the heart of the minstrel is breaking.

Her voice faltered—she paused.

"Come! no miserable, maudlin, mawkish self-pity, I beseech you!" whispered Major Cabell, stooping to her ear.

Whether Mr. Clifton heard the cruel whisper, or whether he only saw her slight agitation, is uncertain—but he drew near and stood by her side. She recovered, and continued—

He had lived for his love, for his country he died,
They were all that to life——

She paused again—again essayed to sing—her voice quavering, sunk into silence like the rudely-swept strings of the harpsichord—the grayness of death crept over her countenance, and she fell back into the arms of her father, who angrily exclaimed—

"Charles! you are a brute! a demon! to ask her to sing that song. Zuleime! Zuleime, my darling! speak to me!"

He sat down on the sofa, holding her in his arms. The ladies drew around with fans, with cold water, with hartshorn. But she recovered very soon, and sat up—and declined going up stairs to bed—and thanked them all for their care, gently begging them not to take so much trouble on her account.

"This is all very strange, madam," said Mrs. Cabell, aside to Mrs. Clifton.

"Zuleime is so nervous and sensitive ever since Carolyn's illness, that the news of that massacre, and the death of her old playmate and companion, has quite overwhelmed her. I suppose this music awoke her sensibilities," said Georgia, composedly.

If Mrs. Cabell had any suspicion of the truth, she was too well bred to express it then and there. And the matter ended for the moment.

But after this evening, Zuleime was never the same. Her fortitude seemed entirely to have given way. Her calmness was utterly broken up. A strange, wild terror and incertitude had come upon her.

The next day, Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain, came over to call on the visitors. Nevertheless, in the course of the call

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Major Cabell found the opportunity he sought, of taking Zuleime to task for what he called her miserable weakness.

"You are unfaithful—false at heart—you cherish the image of this young man secretly, while you pretend to be true to me! Pah! Well! why don't you answer me? Have you anything to say?"

"Cousin Charles, does not the grave sanctify any affection? Is it a crime to remember a dead friend?"

"It is a miserable, druling weakness! a maudlin, mawkish, drivelling, puling piece of unfaithfulness to duty—and leads you into the exhibition of such scenes as that of last-night! Such whining, whimpering, contemptible *self-pity!* I protest you are the most false-hearted and selfish woman I ever met with in my life. It is *your own* griefs and regrets and reverses, that occupy you all the time. And now! instead of listening to me, and replying—you are falling away into thought again! Come! answer me, now! Was it not self-pity, that caused you to faint during the singing of that *à propos* song—which, by the way, I gave you as an ordeal! Come! say! Wasn't it self-pity?"

"*No, nor was it the song.* If I pitied myself, should I not pity *you* as much? It is not such a happy fate, Cousin Charles, to marry a grief-stricken girl like me, I know."

"*No!* If I calculate upon your continued indulgence of that grief, which I do not! *No!* Trust me on the part of my wife, there must and shall be no such exhibitions of feeling as that of last night."

"I do not know why you wish to marry me!" she broke forth with strange wildness. "You do not love me! Perhaps you hate me, and marriage will give you the same power to work out your hate as it would to act out your love! Yes! I do suppose that is really the key to the riddle!"

"Perhaps it is," he answered, sarcastically.

"One thing I beg of you," she said; "while we stay here—in my father's presence—try to use me kindly—to spare his feelings—he is an old man. Reserve your vengeance until I am your wife, until we get to Richmond, when you will have full power, and ample time and space to work your will."

While she spoke so wildly, she pressed and rubbed her hand spasmodically against her heart. And her pale brow was corrugated, and her intense black eyes strained and sharpened as by mental and physical pain. She gasped for breath, and began again.

"I do not know—I am sure—I cannot tell—whether, after all, we will ever mar—"

What she was about to say was cut short by the entrance of Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain, who came in, with her shawl and bonnet on, to take leave of Zuleime and Major Cabell, and invite them to join the rest of the family in coming to dine and spend the evening at Hardbargain the next day, Major Cabell accepted the invitation for himself and Zuleime, and the lady took her departure.

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The next day was Saturday. The family set out on their visit at an early hour of the day, as is the social custom of country neighbors. Old Mr. Clifton, his wife, and his eldest daughter, rode in his carry-all. Mrs. Cabell and her three daughters went in that lady's carriage. Zuleime rode on horseback, attended by Major Cabell.

It was a glorious Indian summer day, when the splendor of the autumnal sunlight would be too dazzling, but for the soft, warm mist spread veil-like over it. At another time, Zuleime, true worshiper of nature, might have drawn deep draughts of pleasure from the beauty of the scene. But now the gorgeous magnificence of the forests, in their many colored foliage —the misty mountain steeps softening the glory—the fine transparent neutral tint of the heavens leading the eye and mind up through infinite heights of ether—the glowing clouds reposing along the horizon—all were lost upon her.

An hour's ride by the carriage road brought the party to Hardbargain.

Mrs. Clifton received them with her usual quiet cordiality. There was something very composing in that calm, kind, self-possessed woman's manner. There was something very sedative also in the air of her home. In her company and in her house the restless became quiet, the anxious easy, the desponding cheerful, even the despairing mourners over some great heart-wreck, grew languidly aware of how much good was left them in the comforts of daily domestic life, and the amenities of social intercourse.

She was strikingly like her son. One was inclined to wonder how they—so nearly identical in features and complexion —should differ so wildly in many points of character and sentiment, and had to remember that all in which he did not resemble her was inherited from the Cliftons. Kate felt the likeness keenly. And when the lady turned those quiet, brilliant eyes upon her, her heart thrilled to the glance with strange pain and pleasure. And when once or twice—for the lady was never very demonstrative in her affection —she had quietly drawn the maiden to her bosom—it was such a heart-feeding comfort, that Kate felt there would be no possibility of forgetting Archer Clifton, while thrown into daily intercourse with his mother. Once when Mrs. Clifton had looked tenderly into her eyes, and drawn and pressed her closely against her breast, the girl, lost for an instant, had thrown her arms around the lady, and buried her face in her bosom. And for some time after that, terrified at her own impulse, she had been as shy of the mother, as she could have been of the son. Kate had kept away from Hardbargain for many weeks, but to-day, when the party from White Cliffs had arrived, Mrs. Clifton sent for her, with the message that her friend Zuleime had come. That was no sufficient lure to the resolute girl, however, who had once for all determined that nothing but the absolute necessities of others should draw her

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again into the dangerous association of the Cliftons. She returned thanks to the lady, declining the visit. Mrs. Clifton was disappointed in missing the society of her young favorite for that day. Yet the time passed very pleasantly notwithstanding. There is scarcely any such thing as a stiff dinner party in the country. And such a thing was impossible at Hardbargain. The ladies had all brought their "parlor work"—fine netting, knotting, knitting, or sewing—and they worked and conversed in a quiet, pleasant way, while the gentlemen mingled in their conversation, or talked with each other upon the two reigning subjects of country discussion—agriculture and politics—or sauntered out upon the lawn to enjoy the fine autumnal weather until dinner. After which, the ladies in the cozy parlor lounged a little more lazily, and grew a deal more kindly in their interchange of thought and sentiment, and the gentlemen enjoyed a promenade on the piazza, and the stolen luxury of their cigars.

After an early tea the party took leave. They returned in the same manner in which they had come. Zuleime on horseback, escorted by Major Cabell; the others in carriages. Even the soothing influence of Mrs. Clifton's home and society had almost failed to quiet the miserable girl. Her manner, all day long, had been erratic in the extreme—now depressed into gloom—sunken nearly to the depth of stupidity—now full of "starts and flows" as the crime-burthened Macbeth. As she rode home, in perfect silence, the evil eye of her companion watched her stealthily. Her cheek was pale and hollow, and her eye sunken and heavy. Yet sometimes her eyes would lighten as with sudden terror, like those of a startled hare, and her cheek would flush and fade. The road was broad, yet shadowy, from the meeting of the branches of the huge trees overhead. And so soon as the sun went down it became too dusky to permit him to see the flickering and sinking of the fire in her eye and cheek, but he watched her closely, nevertheless. Suddenly he saw her sway to and fro, in the saddle, like a reed blown by the wind. Then, ere he could spring to her aid, the reins dropped from her hands, and she fell from the horse, her foot catching in the stirrup. The well-trained palfrey stopped, and stood without so much as lifting a hoof. With a deep curse, Major Cabell threw himself from his steed, and raised her, disengaging her foot from the stirrup. He sat down on a bank, with her on his knees, and took off her hat, and began to feel her head, neck and arms, for injuries. It seemed impossible to tell whether, or how she was hurt. The carriages were some yards behind, and concealed by a turn of the road. He dipped his hand in a run, at the foot of the bank, and sprinkled her face; and before the carriages arrived, she had opened her eyes, and sat up. She said that she was not hurt—that it was only a fainting spell, such as she had had at the piano. But her

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voice was very weak, and her frame trembling, and her general manner frightened. She placed her hand against Major Cabell's chest, partly to assist herself in rising, partly to push him away, and stood alone upon her feet, until her father's carriage drew up. Then she said she was tired, and wished to get in.

Old Mr. Clifton sent a glance of impotent rage at Major Cabell, as he lifted his child in—placing her in the vacant fourth seat—the other three being occupied by his wife, eldest daughter, and himself.

Zuleime sat next to her sister, and opposite Georgia; and the last mentioned lady studied her *vis-à-vis*, with as much interest, and with far more curiosity and comprehension, than Major Cabell had exercised.

The girl sat perfectly still, and quite lost to all around her. But Georgia saw that it was the fearful stillness of self-restrained frenzy.

They reached home at last. Georgia was handed out first, she waited for Zuleime, who followed. She wished to draw the girl's arm within her own. But Zuleime, turning on her a dilated, strained, fiery gaze, fled past her into the house. And then the lady saw, with a shudder, that it was indeed the fires of incipient madness that kindled the lambent flame in the girl's eyes!

When they were all assembled in the parlor, around the evening fire, with books, and music, and light needle-work—

"Where is Zuleime?" asked her father.

"She has retired to her room, very much fatigued," replied his wife, and the subject dropped.

The next morning, when the family gathered around the breakfast-table, the youngest daughter was still missing.

"Where is Zuleime? Why doesn't Zuleime come? Carolyn, have you seen your sister this morning? How is she?" asked old Mr. Clifton.

Carolyn replied that she had not seen her since the preceding evening.

"Send some one, then, to her chamber, to see how she is, and whether she will join us at breakfast, or have anything sent up to her room. Or—stay! Carolyn, don't send—go yourself, my love, to your sister, it will be only kind."

Carolyn left the table, and went up stairs, and after an absence of fifteen or twenty minutes, returned, and announced, with a pale cheek, that Zuleime's chamber had not been occupied during the night—that she herself was nowhere to be found in the house—and that no one of the servants had seen her since the evening before!

A dreadful suspicion instantly seized upon all who remembered her wild and moody looks and manners of the preceding few days; and they simultaneously arose from the table, and with looks of alarm dispersed in various directions, in quest of the missing girl.

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The house, kitchen, out-buildings, negro quarters, garden, vineyard, orchard, the plantation and the woods were successively and vainly searched.

Messengers were dispatched to Hardbargain and to the neighboring plantations, with inquiries that proved fruitless.

Old Mr. Clifton ran up and down the house and grounds like one distracted.

At last, near night, traces were discovered of the lost one. Upon the edge of the stream, where the banks were soft and deep, small foot-prints were seen—and half-way down the bank her little slipper was found, with its toe deep in the mud, and the heel sticking up, as if lost there in the downward run of its owner—and from the branch of a sapling near, a shred of her crimson dress fluttered, as if caught and torn off in the same swift descent.

Old Mr. Clifton walked down there, to see the spot; but he was *carried* back.

And before the next sun arose, Mrs. Georgia Clifton had her heart's first desire.

She was a widow.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONFESSION.

I was so young—I loved him so—I had
No mother—God forgot me—and I fell!
BROWNING—BLOT ON THE 'SCUTCHEON.

A RETROSPECT of several hours is necessary here. You will remember that during the drive home from Hardbargain, Mrs. Georgia Clifton had watched Zuleime with much interest and curiosity, and with more perspicuity. When the unfortunate girl had sprung from the carriage, and fled up the steps into the house, Mrs. Clifton had followed her. Instead of going up into her chamber, she had passed directly through the hall, and gone out at the back-door—Georgia having kept near her. There was the kitchen garden at the back of the house, and then the vineyard, and then the orchard—through all these she successively passed, with the same wild, hurried gait, and entered the forest beyond, and descended into the deep glen, through which the mountain-stream roared. It was very difficult to follow the reckless steps of the fugitive down this rough declivity, and while cautiously descending, with the aid of projecting fragments of rock and smaller branches of trees and bushes, Georgia lost sight of the girl. When she reached the bottom of the gorge, through which the torrent raged and raved, Zuleime was nowhere to be seen.

The night was very dark, and though a few large, brilliant stars were to be seen directly over head, yet low from the horizon, heavy, black masses of clouds were slowly rolling up. And the wind moaned and died away at intervals—pro-

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phetic of the winter's storm. The single, large stars overhead were reflected in the stream—not clearly and calmly, but plunging and leaping with the wild water. The banks on each side lay shrouded in gloom and mystery, rocks and trees indistinctly blended together in dark and sombre hues. The everlasting mountains stood around, vast, vague, and awful. The seven white peaks gleamed up in the back ground, like the ghostly genii of the scene. A shiver of superstitious fear shook the frame of Georgia, and she had turned to retrace her steps home, when a sound between a moan and a suffocating sob arrested her purpose. She crept towards the spot whence the sound proceeded, and there, half hidden in the deep gloom of overhanging willows, she dimly discerned the figure of the unhappy girl, bending over the stream, and gazing intently upon the water, where the reflection of the stars leaped and plunged with the waves. As if communing with herself, she murmured—"There is peace there! There is peace there!" Then her form bent lower, her gaze grew more earnest and intense, as though body, soul and spirit were irresistibly fascinated, drawn down by the glamour of the water! And—"There is peace, deep peace there," she muttered! How stormy must have been the soul that saw deep peace in the raging torrent! Her eyes shone in the dusk with a bright, phosphoric light, and still pouring their splendor upon the dark, wild water, she murmured—"Peace! deep peace." Suddenly up flew her arms, and she sprang forward.

The ready hand of Georgia caught her shoulder and pulled her back, exclaiming—

"Mad girl! What are you about to do?"

Zuleime sprang around with her eyes all wide and ablaze, like one suddenly waking up from a terrible dream, and not yet quite brought to consciousness. Georgia drew her away from the dangerous proximity of the torrent. Zuleime threw her hands to her head with sudden recollection and intensity of consciousness, and sunk down at the feet of the lady, clasping her knees, and exclaiming—

"Oh! you don't know what you've done! Why did you pluck me back! There was peace there! The only peace left for me!"

"You are frantic, miserable girl! *What* is the meaning of this madness?" asked Georgia, in a stern, curt tone. Convulsive sobs, shaking as with a tempest the form of the girl, alone answered her.

"*What* will your father—what will your intended husband think of this? Say! Speak! What do you suppose Major Cabell—"

"Oh! *do not* speak of him!" gasped the girl.

"Will you tell me what you mean by this conduct?" sneered Georgia.

"Mamma—" commenced Zuleime but her voice broke down.

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"Zuleime! come get up and come home!"

"Oh! no, no, no! *Not* home! *Never* home again!"

"Once more, what am I to think of this frantic behaviour."

"Mamma!"

"Don't call me mamma, if you please! It may not be pleasant or politic, to acknowledge that tender relationship. But explain yourself, lest I bring you to those who will demand the explanation with less forbearance!"

"Mercy! mercy! I will tell you anything! everything! Only do not kill my father with the story!"

"Speak, then!"

"Lady—"

"Well!"

But some feeling stronger than fear, gripped her heart and stopped her speech.

"Zuleime! How long will you try my patience?"

"Madam—"

Another hesitation.

"*What*, then?"

"I have been—a wife! I am—a widow! I am fated to be—"

"Well," asked Georgia, in a deep-drawn breath between her teeth, "you are fated to be—"

"*A mother!*" breathed the girl, in a dying voice, covering her face with both hands, and sinking lower on the ground.

There was a long, deep pause, filled up with the roar of the torrent and the moan of the rising wind. Suddenly up sprang Zuleime, with fire in her eyes, and made a dash towards the water. The swift arm of Georgia caught and dragged her back. No word was spoken yet. The impulse of frenzy passed off, and Zuleime sunk into her old posture.

"Get up," at last said Georgia, half-shaking, half-putting the girl upon her feet. "Get up and come with me."

And she drew her to a fragment of rock, at a safer distance, pushed her down on the seat, and dropped herself by her side.

"Now, tell me of this," she commanded, in a hard, curt tone. "You were married?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Who was your husband?"

"Ah, you know! You *must* know! He who died in yonder field of blood, under the tomahawk of the Shoshonowa—I am very wretched!"

"Stay!—is this true—about the marriage, I mean?"

"True as God's Word!"

"Certainly the marriage was not legal without your father's consent, and would have been annulled by him. But now we will permit his consent to be supposed. Let's see! the widow of an army officer entitled to his half-pay, perhaps; I do know—perhaps to a pension, too, as he died in the field of battle. Zuleime, upon the whole, I think that you

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were rash to attempt suicide. Your position and prospects are not so bad. If Major Cabell is anxious to possess you, now that he supposes you to be a maudlin, love-sick girl, grieving yourself to death over the grave of your lover, he will be quite as willing to marry you a year hence, when he knows you to be the widow of Captain Fairfax—for *that*, I understand, was his rank when he fell. Come, girl, live! Acknowledge your marriage, like a truthful woman! Bring your child into God's world like a Christian woman! And after a sufficient time has elapsed, marry Major Cabell, like a sensible woman! For I do assure you, that the gallant Major is sufficiently enamored of your young beauty to wait that length of time, if compelled to do so."

"Ah, yes! I think he is enamored of me as the Shoshonowa was of poor Frank's hair!" bitterly said the girl.

"This marriage must be announced at once! Who performed the ceremony?"

"Old Mr. Saunders, the Baptist preacher."

"What! He who was found dead in his bed.

"Yes, yes, it was he!"

"Pity for your sake that he is dead! But, you doubtless had some confidant, some witness—Kate Kavanagh, perhaps, or some one else? Say! speak! There was some witness to your marriage, who can be produced to prove it?"

"No! There was none! It was *so* sudden!"

"None!—no proof of your marriage? Yet stop—stay!—there is a chance yet, I believe; I do not know. You were married with a license, of course?"

"Yes, yes!"

"The country clerk who issued it will probably remember the occurrence. That will be something in your favor, though, alas! only imperfect, circumstantial evidence; for the mere taking out of a license is no conclusive proof of a marriage."

"Ah, great or small, as proof it is of no avail. The license was procured *blank*, for Carolyn and Archer, because he had forgotten her full name, and it was afterwards filled out with our names."

"No matter. You were married with it! And now I remember a saving thing! The clergyman who married you of course affixed his certificate of marriage to the license, and gave it to you. Where is it? All depends now upon that. Where is it?"

"I do not know! I never saw it! If the person gave one probably Frank took charge of it!"

Again a pause fell between them, and the noises of the wind and waters arose in gloomy concert. At last Georgia spoke—

"Miserable girl! And so you have no proof whatever of this *asserted* marriage?"

"None! none! But oh, what does that matter, after all?

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God knows that we loved, and *were* married, as He knows that we will soon be reunited!"

"Wretched girl! who will credit the story?"

"No one in the world, perhaps! But, ah! what odds? Could the proving of my marriage bring *him* back to life, or give my father happiness?"

"Most wretched girl! You seem quite lost to the shame you have brought upon yourself! the dishonor you have brought upon your family!"

"Ah, go on! You cannot say anything to me so bitter as my heart is saying all the time!"

"Your father! Your old, gray-haired father! to bring him to shame in his old age! Can he survive the knowledge of your fall?"

"I know he cannot! I know it! Oh, oh!"

"Carolyn, too! To destroy all her prospects in life! Who will ever wed the sister of a supposed—"

"Ah, spare me that! Why did you pluck me back! the river would have covered all!"

"Because I did not know or dream your folly! Zuleime, your father, who could bear your death, could never survive your disgrace!"

"Oh, God, I feel it!"

"Zuleime—*you must die!*"

A pause, when but for the roar of the torrent, and the howl of the wind, their very hearts might have been heard slowly beating.

"Zuleime, you must not live to bring shame upon us! You must die!"

"Ah! Why did you hinder me when it would not have been a crime?"

"What mean you?"

"I was mad then! I knew not what I did! God would not have charged me with my death! I am sane now!—sane, though most wretched!"

"Zuleime, you must die!—not in reality, but in appearance. It must be believed that you are dead—dead by your own act, as you intended. And I will provide for your escape and your future support."

"Alas! lady, what is it you advise me to do? Deceive my poor father, so cruelly, and never, never undeceive him again? And never, never see him again?"

"Lost girl! If I had not saved you an hour ago, would you have been alive to ask the question?"

"Ah, no! But, oh, my father! Who will comfort him?"

"Who would have comforted him had you effected your purpose this hour? What would comfort him for your degradation? Foolish girl, that will console him for your supposed death, which never could console him for your fall—*time*. Besides, if you are supposed to be dead, it will not only save us all from shame, but your father will be your heir, and

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can appropriate that thirty thousand dollars to the payment of his debts. Zuleime, it seems to me you owe us all this sacrifice."

"I—I am very weak and miserable. I—I scarcely know right from wrong! Do what you please with me, only console my father!"

"And at any rate, girl, this plan is far better than the self-destruction you meditated awhile ago. By this plan you will be able to save your child."

"Ah! to what end? To be as miserable as its mother?"

"Zuleime! time presses. To-night you must journey to L———, and take the stage thence to Richmond. I have a negro here on whose secrecy I can depend; he shall take two horses from the stable and convey you to L——— in time to meet the Richmond stage. I will give you a letter that you must deliver to its address as soon as you reach the city. Get up now and come with me," said Georgia, taking her hand to assist her in rising.

The unhappy girl mechanically yielded herself to the guidance of "the dark ladie," and they ascended the glen.

Retracing their steps through forest, field, orchard, vineyard and garden, they reached the house, and entered by the back door. The hall was deserted; the family being at that hour gathered around their parlor fire, and the servants being at supper.

"Zuleime, go quietly up into your chamber and get ready, while I go down and find the man I spoke of," said Georgia.

Zuleime mechanically obeyed———. The next hour, while her father and sister and friends were enjoying their happy evening reunion in the warm, bright parlor, the wretched Zuleime, through the dark night, and the howling wind, commenced her journey. Of what followed the discovery of her loss, you are already possessed.

CHAPTER XX.

A DOMESTIC SCENE.

A light, commodious chamber,
Looking out to the hill, where the shine
Of the great sun may enter.—MARY HOWITT.

NEARLY twelve months have passed since the death of Mr. Clifton. It is October, the most glorious month in the year, when the gorgeous beauty of nature more than satisfies—when it enraptures the soul.

I shall introduce you into a chamber, whose three large windows look out upon the scene of glorious magnificence, only to be found when mountains, vales and forests wear their gorgeous autumn livery. It is a very large apartment, so long and lofty, that the great four-post bedstead, standing with its head against the upper end, is not in the way. At the lower end of the room, there is an old-fashioned fire-place,

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where an oak fire is burning. The floor is covered with an ingrain carpet, of warm, rich hues. The bedstead, lounge and cushioned chairs are clothed with dark, bright chintz. The windows are curtained with orange-colored damask, which give a mellow, autumnal tone to the atmosphere of the room. The curtains are festooned back, to admit the sunshine, and the glorious view without.

The lounge is drawn up to the left of the fire-place, and Carolyn Clifton, in deep mourning, reclines upon it. She is very much changed since we saw her last. There is scarcely a trace of her disease left—only a few pits scattered thinly over the lower part of the chin and throat. But she is very fragile, and her thin, white face is almost spectral, in contrast with her black dress. Her fair hair has grown out richer, sunnier in hue than before. It is just long enough to turn, in natural, smooth ringlets, that reach to her throat. And she wears it so. And those bright curls soften and shade the pearly whiteness of her cheek. The expression of her countenance has changed also. It wears a subdued, almost patient air of suffering. She is beautiful, although now that the roundness and bloom of her cheek are gone, she does not think so. She is beautiful, as she lies there contemplating, with remorseful tenderness, a miniature that she has drawn from her bosom.

In the cushion chair, on the right of the fire-place, sits Catherine Kavanagh. She has also changed within the year. Her form is fuller, rounder, more womanly. Her grave, almost stern features, have softened into gentleness. Her voice is softer and deeper. Its tones indeed are very beautiful, and modulated with every shade of feeling. She wears her hair in the same old style, parted over the forehead, rippling down in dark, bright wavelets around her cheeks, and carried behind, and woven with the back hair into a large plait, and then rolled round and round into a succession of rings—a rich, dark, burnished mass of hair—

> "Golden where the sunlight played,
> But where the tendrils sought the shade,
> Dark, but very beautiful."

Her dress of dark brown stuff, with the little white throat-ruffle, and the black silk apron, is not very becoming to her. But she thinks too little of her personal appearance, to care for any quality in her clothing beyond neatness and comfort. She is knitting very leisurely, stopping occasionally to measure the stocking she is engaged upon with the finished one which lies upon her lap. Kate is silent and thoughtful. All her life, up to this date, has been passed in the ministry to sorrow—yes, to all sorts of sorrow—to the suffering arising from vice—to the despair caused by evil passions—to common illness—to pestilence forsaken of all but her—to death! Yes! But little turned of sixteen years of age, and to all these forms of human misery had she been—not a minister-

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ing angel, but a ministering child and woman—that ministry of sorrow had filled up all her years, from early childhood, to this hour. Now her days were passed in soothing and cheering the solitude and depression of her invalid companion. And Kate was grave and thoughtful, because she was tempted to think that life was made up of nothing else but trouble. Her hope in happiness beyond her experience was faint. Her faith was dim. And no wonder. It seemed time she saw some one else's happiness, if not her own. It was hard to pour the words of faith, hope and cheerfulness into the ear of another, when the fountain in her own heart was failing. It was only a temporary darkening and failing of the spirit. A silent, earnest prayer, and all was clear and strong again. The room was provocative of thought, if not of pensiveness. It was so still and warm and mellow, between the fire and the golden sunshine coming softened through the curtains. And both girls were silent, while Kate leisurely plied her knitting-needles, and Carolyn contemplated the miniature. At last Miss Clifton spoke—

"Catherine, look upon that face. Study it. Should you believe, now, that the owner of that beautiful face could be unrelenting, unforgiving?" And she passed the miniature to her companion. Kate received it—glanced at it. It was a faithful likeness of Archer Clifton. And those features, so long unseen, and now suddenly revealed, thrilled with such electric power to the heart of the girl, that after the first recognizing glance, she instantly returned it. And though her heart had paused in its pulsations, and now throbbed thick and fast, she answered, calmly—

"He is not unrelenting or unforgiving, Miss Clifton."

"Oh! he is! he is! It has been fifteen months since we parted in anger, and no word or sign from him yet. Oh! Kate, what do you think of it?"

"I think he truly loves you, Miss Carolyn."

"Oh! he *did*—he *did*, but I scorned and insulted him, and it is past, past!"

"There is no past tense to real love, lady."

"Ah, Catherine, you speak of what you have had no experience in. My scorn killed his love."

"Real love is immortal, lady, it cannot be killed."

"Ah, child, you speak without knowledge."

"Without experimental knowledge, Miss Clifton. And all the highest truths we have are obtained without experimental knowledge. I know that true affection is undying, by the same light that without the Bible shows me that God exists—that He made all souls, and that all souls are immortal. It is one of the 'self-evident' truths. Ah, Miss Clifton, true affection can no more be killed by scorn, than an angel could be overcome by a demon, than Heaven could be conquered by hell. In the contest between true affection and scorn, it is affection must conquer—scorn must yield. It must be so,

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lady. The heavens are pledged to it. The sovereignty of the right is involved in it. And when, in such a contest, affection fails, it is because it never was true. No, lady, true affection is never conquered. It is scorn that is conquered. It is scorn that has yielded now. You do not scorn him now, lady."

"No—I would I could!"

"Then, in the death of your own scorn see the immortality of his love. He will come back to you. He will come back the first free moment that he has."

"Ah, Catherine! In all this fifteen months he has not written to me."

"You do not know that, Miss Carolyn. *I* believe that he has written to you, and that the letter has been lost. You know how irregular and uncertain the mail is from that distant frontier."

"Catherine! I have been thinking of writing to him. What is your opinion? What would you advise me to do?"

"Not for the world, lady! For, trust me, for every step of advance a woman makes, a man of high honor and fine sensibilities retreats."

Miss Clifton's brow flushed, and she made a gesture of impatience, as she exclaimed—

"Then *why, why* knowing that, does he not write?"

"Because, perhaps, his first letters miscarried, and he stopped under the supposition that you would not answer him. And then, lady, under all these circumstances, the stiff pen and the cold paper cannot convey all the burning words he would have to pour out at your feet. He will come!"

"'He will come.' Ah! in that very phrase is a knell deeper than all the rest! He will come! And what a spectre he will see in me! He cannot continue to love me! Impossible! Impossible! He can never love such a faded and scarred ruin as I am."

"Dear Miss Clifton, I have told you so often that you are *not* a ruin! Your face is very lovely, indeed it is! Fair and delicate and pensive, and far more attractive to all good hearts than ever it was in its high bloom."

"Ah, but faded—faded—faded!" mournfully replied Carolyn.

"And then, dear lady, true affection is of the soul. It has been said that love is blind. It is not so. Love has Divine eyes, and creates the beauty that it looks upon. He will love you the more for the calamity and sorrows that have fallen upon you. He will see a deeper beauty in your pensive face, and his love will make it real."

"Oh! impossible, I tell you! Impossible! The sight of me would shock him. He would turn away."

"Lady, do you love your cousin?"

"*Love him?* Ah, God!"

"Dear lady, if he had returned from the frontier with the loss of an arm, a leg, or an eye—or with the hideous scar of

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a sword cut across cheek and brow, could *you* have turned from him revolted?"

"Oh, no, no, no! Oh, Heaven, no! I should have done all I could to convince him that he was beautiful to me still—that I loved him the deeper for his misfortunes!"

"Then, dear lady, judge his noble heart by your own."

"Ah, but you said yourself, just now, when advising me not to write, that men feel so differently from women!"

"Yes, but not in tenderness—not in constancy!"

"There is the boy coming from the post-office, Catherine! It is strange—it is strange—but though I have been disappointed a hundred times, I still hope, and the coming of every mail makes my heart pause! Go, dear Catherine, and see what there is."

Kate rolled up her knitting, and dropped it into a little straw basket, and went below.

"Only one letter, an' the Pos'-Master say how it war for Miss Carolyn," said the boy below stairs.

A letter for her at last! Carolyn's heart stopped almost to death, until Kate ran back up the stairs, entered the room, and placed the letter in her hands.

"It is from Richmond," she said, in a disappointed tone, as she opened it.

"From my Aunt Cabell," she added, and began to read it, while Kate resumed her knitting.

"I hope your friends are all well," said Catherine.

"Yes—" replied Miss Clifton; and then a smile of amusement flitted over her face—and still running her eye down the letter, she continued—"My Aunt Cabell writes me that my excellent step-dame, Mrs. Georgia Clifton, is now the reigning belle of Richmond—the most beautiful woman, the most charming musician, the most fascinating waltzer, and the most elegant equestrian in the city! She passes for a wealthy (!) young widow—and her credit is unlimited; and her debts and her extravagance, of course, unbounded. She occupies a whole suite of rooms in the most expensive hotel in the city, and entertains around her, both day and night, a host of adoring worshippers. She has cut her father—worthy man—dead! She is going to bring down a party of ladies and gentlemen to spend Christmas at her country-seat, (!) White Cliffs. Now, what do you think of that, Catherine? Pray Heaven she may marry soon, and not wear our name long enough to scandalize it! Mrs. Cabell goes on to say, that Mrs. Georgia cannot long play that game—that Archer Clifton must soon return, and take possession of his property, when it will be arrested. Alas! she does not know that Captain Clifton is as much under the dominion of that dangerous woman as it is possible to be. He will probably be proud to leave Mrs. Clifton in possession here as long as she finds it convenient or agreeable to stay. Now, what do you think of all this, Catherine?"

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"Dear lady, I know that you feel very unpleasantly, that all those gay city strangers should be coming down here at Christmas, to turn the quiet house into a hall of orgies. But I do not see how you can prevent it. You can elude it, though! You can go to Hardbargain, you know, and remain until Mrs. Georgia and her guests have departed again. I would do that."

"No, dear Catherine, there will be no necessity for that, either! My Aunt Cabell has anticipated my embarrassment, and proposed a plan. My aunt and all her family are coming down here to spend the months of October and November, while their city mansion is undergoing repairs—painting, papering, and so on. And she proposes that I shall return with her at the first of December, and pass the winter in Richmond."

"And will you go?"

"I do not know. But, Kate, dear, you have comforted me so much, and aunt's account of Mrs. Georgia's city airs has diverted me so much, that I think I have spirits for a ride! Go order the horses, and tell Dandy to be ready to attend us. We will go up to Hardbargain and take tea with Aunt Clifton, and amuse her with this letter.

Mrs. Cabell and her daughters, attended by Major Cabell, arrived in due time, and were received with great pleasure by their orphaned relative. And Catherine, now that she was no longer necessary to the cheerfulness of Miss Clifton, took leave and returned to her brother's cot. Life in the mansion, and life in the hut, like day and night, about equally divided the girl's experience—a strange lot, to be ever alternating between luxury and refinement, and poverty and coarseness. And though it was a wonderfully strengthening discipline, Kate found the contrast so painful as to wish that life would change—in some way.

A month passed away—during which she heard nothing whatever from White Cliffs. She was therefore in total ignorance of what was going on there, until one cold morning that had succeeded a snow-stormy night, while she was shovelling away the snow in front of the cottage door, Dandy rode up and delivered her a note from Miss Clifton. The note ran thus:

"DEAR CATHERINE—I am going to leave for Richmond with Aunt Clifton to-morrow morning. Come over, dear girl, and let me take leave of you before I start. Come, my good, wise Catherine, for I want to consult you about a certain matter.—Your friend, "CAROLYN."

Kate saddled her pony and set out, attended by Dandy. As soon as she arrived at White Cliffs, she was invited immediately up into Miss Clifton's room. She found the young lady surrounded with trunks and bandboxes, and busy with her maids, packing. Carolyn dismissed her attendants, beg-

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ged Kate to be seated, and sat down by her. After a few mutual inquiries about health and so on, and a little introductory conversation, and some considerable hesitation, Miss Clifton said—

"Catherine! I think—I hope that I have succeeded at last in emancipating myself from the degrading slavery of that old love spell! At last the dread sense of bereavement and desolation is deadened. . . . . If I were to see him again, however, I do not know how it might be. . . . . Perhaps, though, I shall never see him again. . . . . Kate! I have had a proposal for marriage. . . . . My cousin Major Cabell! . . . . It was at least generous in him, all things considered. . . . Family feeling, I suppose. . . . . Kate, I think of accepting him! . . . We owe something to our position in society. . . . My Aunt Cabell has been talking to me about it for a month past."

Miss Clifton made this communication in a hesitating, disjointed manner; while Catherine looked and listened in grief and astonishment, feeling regret amounting almost to remorse, that she had left her friend, enfeebled in mind and body, so long under the influence of a strong-willed thoroughly worldly-minded woman. And she understood the instinct that had impelled the wavering girl to send for *her* to steady her. And then athwart these her purest emotions, swept a dark, burning impulse, like a breath of hell. It was the whisper of the devil, and it said to her,—"Agree with her—agree with her! Let her marry another if she wishes, and thus remove the greatest impediment that separates you from the love, the hope of Archer Clifton." Catherine stood for a moment horrified by the darkness of the temptation. But then summoning the whole strength of her soul, she inwardly exclaimed, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" And the devil flew from her.

"You do not answer me, Catherine. My dear girl, I have so much confidence in your rectitude of mind! Advise me!"

"Dear Miss Clifton, *never*, as you value your whole life's peace and rectitude—*never*, for any purpose whatever—under any temptation whatever—consent to marry a man you do not love; *never*, as you hope for earthly content—as you trust in God—*never* put an insurmountable object between yourself and one you love! How criminal to become a wife, while you love another living man! How terrible to find out, when it is too late, that he loves you still! Perhaps from year to year to long for the—! Lady, I have no words strong enough to express to you all that I feel and fear on this subject! Grave faults sometimes follow little errors! I would fain gain your promise not to entertain any gentleman's suit until you have met again with Captain Clifton! You cannot have long to wait. He *must* return to settle up this estate. And legal business, if nothing else, must bring you together."

"Alas! alas! no! the affairs of this property will be settled by his attorney. Kate, I am very miserable!"

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"Dear lady, I know it! Do not, when tempted by hopelessness, do that which you may regret all your life! That which may shut out the possibility of happiness for ever! I wish I could go to Richmond with you."

"Oh, I wish you could! I think that you could save me from danger, Kate."

"I think you want an honest friend near you, Miss Clifton! But one thing you can do—you can resolve not to form any matrimonial engagement until you have again met with Captain Clifton. And you can bind your resolution by a promise. Promise me, dear lady, by the interest I take in you, to hold yourself free from entanglements, until you see your cousin."

"Kate!—yes, I solemnly promise you, by all I hold sacred, that I will do as you advise in this matter! And, Kate, enfeebled as I am, or may become, in mind or body, I cannot break my pledged word! Good girl! You have saved me again! Oh, Kate! Kate! do you think I don't know the full extent of your disinterestedness! Oh, Kate! noble girl! God reward you!"

Catherine began to tremble so violently, that Miss Clifton threw her arms around her, and pressed her to her bosom, whispering,

"Never fear, dear girl! sweet girl! I will not breathe another word! I would as soon sacrilegiously snatch the veil from the sanctuary, as breathe another word about it!"

When Catherine reached home in the afternoon, she found a message waiting her from Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain. She went up immediately to the farm-house, and found that lady looking very happy.

"Catherine, my dear, sit down. I have good news. I have just received a letter from Archer. He will be in Richmond in four days from this! But his duties are such that he will not be able to leave Richmond for some weeks. He begs me to meet him there! He has been promoted, Kate! He is now Major Clifton, and has been appointed aid-de-camp to the Governor!"

"I am rejoiced to hear it, madam," replied Kate, calmly, though her heart stood still with the suddenness of this news. "You will send over and inform Miss Clifton, will you not, madam?"

"No, I think not, Catherine. Why excite and disturb her on the eve of a journey? Besides, Catherine, I have many misgivings! This long persistence in silence—his never mentioning her name in any of his few letters to me! his never replying to the letter I wrote upon the subject!—all this is foreboding! I must not meddle farther in this affair until I have seen my son, and can judge of his state of mind in regard to it! . . . . . But, Catherine, my dear, I sent for you for this: I am going to Richmond on Tuesday, for

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the purpose of spending some weeks near my son. I need a female companion, and I have your grandfather's and your brother's consent for you to accompany me; that is, if you are willing. Will you accompany me, Kate?"

"I shall be very glad to do so, indeed, Mrs. Clifton!" said the young girl.

"Then return home at once, Kate, and prepare for the journey. You will have a great deal to do to make things comfortable for your grandfather and brother during your absence, and to get yourself ready for your city visit."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE CITY.

In a proud city and rich—
A city fair and old,
Filled with the world's most costly things,
Of precious stones and gold;
Of silks, fine wool, and spiceries,
And all that's bought and sold.—MARY HOWITT.

On her arrival at Richmond, Mrs. Clifton engaged for herself and Catherine two rooms—a chamber with two beds, and a neat adjoining parlor—in a quiet, retired boarding-house.

Miss Clifton was the guest of Mrs. Cabell, in the most fashionable quarter of the city. Captain Clifton had not yet arrived, but was daily expected. Richmond was in the commencement of the fashionable season, and was already quite full of gay company. Every evening witnessed some one or two grand balls, or great private parties. The theatres and the concert rooms were in full operation. But no faint echo of all these various forms of revelry came to the sequestered neighborhood that Mrs. Clifton had chosen for her retreat. No news of the fashionable world reached her, except constant bulletins of Mrs. Georgia Clifton's progress through society. She was one of those city celebrities whose sayings and doings are the exciting topic of all classes. Where she went, and what she wore, and when she rode out. Whom she cut directly, whom she smiled upon, whom she slighted, and whom she received, were the most interesting subjects of discussion. The Belle of the Rappahannock, the Dark Ladye, the Gipsy Beauty, were some of the many names she had won. All these matters were freely and lightly commented upon in Mrs. Clifton's presence, by gentlemen boarders, who knew nothing whatever of that lady's connexion with the reigning toast of Richmond. Mrs. Clifton rested two days before calling upon Mrs. Cabell and her family. Miss Clifton expressed almost as much surprise as pleasure at the sight of her aunt, but forebore to question her motive in coming so suddenly to the city. Perhaps Carolyn had heard a rumor of Major Clifton's preferment and expected arrival, and for that reason was silent. Mrs. Clifton never named the subject during her informal call. At taking leave

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she left her address, and informed her niece that Kate Kavanagh was in town with her. Carolyn expressed much pleasure at hearing this, and promised to call very soon. The very next day Mrs. Cabell came in her carriage, and invited and urged Mrs. Clifton and her protegée to return with her, and make her house their home during their sojourn in Richmond. After some hesitation and reflection, Mrs. Clifton, accepted the invitation, and promised to go over the next day. The next morning, therefore, Mrs. Cabell sent her carriage to convey Mrs. Clifton and Catherine. They were received by Mrs. Cabell with great politeness and *empressement*, and conducted by that lady herself into two large and luxuriously furnished chambers, connected with each other, where they found a neat, pretty mulatto girl, ready to wait upon them—for Mrs. Cabell, with all her hard wordliness, was truly kind and hospitable.

The evening of the succeeding day was the appointed time for the Governor's first reception. Mrs. Cabell and her family were going, of course. And Mrs. Clifton resolved to go—not for her own sake, but for that of Catherine, whom she had determined should see all that was to be seen during her stay in the metropolis. A somewhat haughty surprise elevated the handsome black eyebrows of Mrs. Cabell when she found that Mrs. Clifton intended to take her *demoiselle du compagnie*, but she was far too well bred to express it in any other manner. And as for Mrs. Clifton, she always did whatever she thought proper to do, in the coolest, calmest, most matter-of-course manner, without the slightest regard to other people's weaknesses and follies. You know, besides, that she was a thorough republican. And Mrs. Cabell remembered that the public reception at the gubernatorial mansion was a sort of *omnium gatherum*, where all who behaved themselves might come—from the oldest Major-General of the army to the shoemaker who made his boots. And again, no one in Richmond knew who the girl really was. All these things had Mrs. Cabell to recall to mind before she could reconcile herself to the idea of Kate's being of the party.

When the night and the hour arrived, several gentlemen, beaux of the Misses Cabell, came to escort the ladies. Major Cabell attended his cousin Carolyn and one of his sisters. Judge Cabell took charge of his wife and eldest daughter. Mrs. Clifton had hoped that her son would have reached the city in time to have escorted herself and Catherine. When they were all assembled in the parlor, Major Cabell brought a gentleman up to Mrs. Clifton, whom he presented as Colonel Conyers, of the army, leaving to Mrs. Clifton the responsibility of presenting the aristocrat to the plebeian Kate. Mrs. Clifton did it at once, in the most natural way in the world. And the gallant Colonel, after a few compliments, hoped to have the honor of waiting upon Mrs. Clifton and her "lovely charge" to the Mansion House. Mrs. Clifton gratefully ac-

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cepted his services—and soon after, they entered the carriage, and were driven off. This party reached their destination a full half hour before Mrs. Cabell and family, and other ultra fashionables, who fancied that it was vulgar to go early, and imagined that their *ton* depended upon late hours and other observances. Mrs. Clifton was very plainly dressed, in black satin with a lace scarf—Catherine very simply, in white crape, with a scarlet geranium twined in her black hair. A moment in the cloak-room sufficed to re-arrange their simple toilet. They were then conducted into the saloon. This apartment was fitted up in a somewhat different style to those of the present day. It was illuminated by three large hanging chandeliers, holding innumerable wax candles; and warmed by two enormous coal fires, one at each extremity. It was already well filled with a miscellaneous company. After their presentation to the Governor, Colonel Conyers inquired whether they chose to join the promenade or to take seats. Mrs. Clifton preferred the latter, and their polite escort conducted them to a side sofa, from which they could note the entrance of fresh guests, and watch the great circle of promenaders going round and round in one long elliptic, three or four persons deep, in the most stupid, treadmill monotony conceivable. Very much interested and amused was our simple country girl, in taking observation of the various characters passing in review before them. Here would be a dowager of sixty, in rouge, ringlets, bare arms and a gossamer dress; here a girl of seventeen, in a black, stiff brocade and heavy head-dress. Here comes a stately, broad-chested, senatorial-looking man—he *looks* the incumbent of some high, official place—he *is* the master tailor, of ——— street. Here comes a red-headed, red-faced, sharp-featured little man, very quick and impatient in his motions, and very high in his voice—he looks like an auctioneer or a constable—he is the great General ———, of the United States Army. Here is a small, dowdy woman, all fuss and flowers, like a barn-house actress—she is the wife of the late Governor——— This is a queenly woman! tall, stately, dignified, with a fine, royal countenance. Pooh! Don't ask who she is—she is the "leading lady" at the city theatre—plays in all the heavy tragedies, but is not even a star. There, apart, watching and reflecting upon the scene, stands a grave-looking individual, in a closely-fitting black suit, and closely-cropped black hair, and set, sallow, saturnine face, looking like an undertaker at a funeral—doubtless some famous preacher—though so miserable a messenger of the glad tidings cannot be imagined. Preacher, indeed! Why, he is H———, the low comedian, and he wears his hair cropped that way by reason of the many different sorts of wigs he has to wear in his different impersonations. To-night, he happens to be off the boards, and enjoys the recreation of sadness and gravity. Ah! here is a debonnair gentleman! all life! a laugh and jest, or a smile and

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a bow for every one. Is he a French dancing-master? No—he is the Rev. Mr. ———, the most popular preacher of the day. Yet these were not all. There *was* a small proportion of really well-dressed and dignified women, and stately, honorable men.

"How do you like the scene, Catherine?" asked Mrs. Clifton.

Kate laughed—then replied—

"I am somewhat disappointed, but very much more diverted! It seems to me so strange that people should look, dress and behave so very inappropriately! and that they could possibly be so very ill-dressed and dowdy at such a great expense. I expected something very recherché and elegant in the saloon of the Governor's mansion. But 'motley is the only wear!'"

The officer laughed, gayly, and then observed—

"Why? Why did you look for something, or rather, for everything recherché and elegant in this crowd? Because you see in the newspaper reports of such gatherings, such phrases as 'the beautiful Miss A———?'—by-the-way, there she is—the young lady with the red hair, milk-white complexion and little eyes; or 'the elegant Mrs. B———?' 'the graceful Mrs. C———?' etc., etc., etc., with revised and improved accounts of their costume, appearance, manners, etc.? Miss Kavanagh, when you have stayed in the city longer, you will know that when a newspaper reporter and letter writer speaks of that dowdy, but wealthy little woman, in the flimsy, scarlet dress, as 'the beautiful, elegant, and accomplished Mrs. G———,' and tells of 'the immense (imaginary) sensation' she made—*he*, the reporter, is morally certain of an invitation to her private parties."

Kate did not like his sarcastic tone, but before she could make any sort of reply, her attention was called to a rising excitement in the room. Every gentleman, from the fidgetty little Major General, down to the grave and dignified low comedian; and every lady, from the ex-Governor's fussy widow, to the stately and self-possessed stock actress, were on the *qui vive*. Kate, while listening and watching for the cause of the excitement, caught a few phrases that helped to enlighten her—they were of this sort:—"A wonder! a perfect wonder! A miracle of dark beauty." "The wealthiest woman in the state, but that is nothing to her marvellous beauty." "Did you see her as '*Egypt*,' at the fancy ball?" "Her portrait, in oil, by——, stands in Stationers' Hall. It has attracted crowds." "No—I have seen the engraving from it in 'Beauty's Annual' for this year. But I have also seen it on the tops of cigar boxes—too bad!" "Hush! here she comes!"

Catherine turned her eyes in the direction towards which all others were gazing. It was Georgia—dark, bright, and more beautiful and bewitching than ever. Her dress was of

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lustrous black *crape-de-lise*, sprinkled over with gold spangles, that gleamed in and out through the dark, transparent drapery, suggesting clear, starlight night. A crowd entered with the star-bright Circe—a crowd attended her during all her progress through the room.

We must leave Georgia to her alluring wiles, and Catherine to her observations, and seek Mrs. Cabell and her party. They are in the dressing-room, and about to leave it. Only Mrs. Cabell turns again and again to survey her form in the mirror and re-adjust the flow of her purple satin dress, or the wave of her white ostrich plumes. When all is done, she turns for the last time to Carolyn, to rebuke her for not adding a single ornament to her mourning dress of black velvet, which is relieved only by the falls of fine Brussels lace on the neck and arms, and the sunny ringlets falling all around her head as low as the throat. Carolyn looks very fragile, but interesting and lovely, though she does not know it. Major Cabell gave his right arm to his mother, and his left to his cousin, and so, as it was now the acme of the fashionable hour, they entered the saloon, and made their slow progress up to the upper end, where the Governor and staff stood, to receive all comers —Mrs. Cabell bowing and smiling to such acquaintances as she chose to recognize in passing, until at length they stopped. A feeling of false shame, a morbid notion that all eyes were upon her, and scrutinized the few pits hidden under the golden curls on her temples, had caused Carolyn to cast her eyes down, and keep them down, during the whole progress through the room—and though her acute ears heard such murmurs as these—"How fair she is," "but how fragile, as if a zephyr would blow her away"—she never fancied they were breathed of her, and never surmised the admiration she elicited. "Governor T———, Miss Clifton, of Clifton," were the words that admonished Carolyn she was standing before the great man, and must look up and curtsy. She curtsied before she looked up, and when she raised her eyes, she saw only Archer Clifton before her, who bowed when he met her glance! The Governor and many others were there, but how could she see any one but Archer Clifton! But, oh! the perversity of human nature! As soon as she met his eyes, all the pride and scorn of her proudest, most scornful days, returned upon her with a vengeance—all the more fiercely, ferociously, that she believed herself a fright, and found Archer Clifton handsomer, more dignified, higher in favor with God and man than ever! Major Cabell was about to pass on instantly with his ladies, to give place to the next arrivals. Returning Archer Clifton's bow with a haughty bend, she threw up her head and swept on with the most superb air of arrogance imaginable. They joined the promenaders—Carolyn all the more unhappy for her show of hauteur—the heart beneath that erected head and expanded chest almost breaking with chagrin. Captain, now Major Clifton, stood at the right hand

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of the Governor, with his eyes roving calmly over the miscellaneous assembly, until they chanced to rest upon the stately form of his mother when they lighted up with surprise and pleasure, and excusing himself from his official attendance, he bowed and withdrew, to hasten to the distant sofa, where she sat alone. Catherine, on the arm of Colonel Conyers, was lost in the slowly revolving crowd of promenaders. He reached Mrs. Clifton's side, and—

"My dearest mother!"

"My dear Archer!" were the greetings exchanged between them with the clasped hands.

"How delighted I am to see you, yet how tantalizing to meet you in this public assembly, after so long an absence!"

"When did you reach the city, Archer?"

"Within the last half hour! Having important dispatches for the Governor, I came at once hither."

"I did not see you enter."

"I came in by the private entrance, and joined his excellency's circle directly. But, my dearest mother! I scarcely hoped you would be in town—how long have you been here?"

"About four days, Archer."

Suddenly both became grave and thoughtful—they were occupied with the same thoughts—of the calamities that had befallen mutual friends since their last parting. They were silent—they did not like to sadden this first meeting by referring to the mournful subject. And before either knew of her approach, Mrs. Georgia had glided swiftly and silently up to them. Now, Mrs. Georgia had passed and repassed Mrs. Clifton a score of times that evening, without once noticing her. But now that Archer Clifton sat by his mother's side, the Circe appeared before them, dark, resplendent, alluring as ever. She was leaning upon the arm of the Lieutenant-Governor. Archer Clifton sprang up immediately, and greeted her with surprise and pleasure. Dismissing her escort with a charming smile and wave of the hand, she sank gracefully, languishingly into the seat by the side of Mrs. Clifton, and glided into her own fascinating style of conversation. After a few minutes, Archer Clifton seemed quite lost to everything else, in the charm of the syren's society, until a certain, sweet, enticing restlessness on the part of the beauty, suggested to him the propriety of inviting her to promenade. She arose with a bewildering smile, that quite drove his mother out of his head, and slipped her arm through his. They joined the promenaders. In the meantime, Kate Kavanagh, on the arm of Colonel Conyers, was moving around in the same circle, highly amused in making observations, and scarcely appreciating the sincere admiration of her escort, that was apparent to every one else, especially to the correspondent of the Fiddle-de-dee, who, in his next letter, in giving an account of the reception, made an item of the manifest admiration of the gallant and distinguished Colonel C——

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for the beautiful and accomplished Miss K———. Catherine at length thought that her kind patroness might be lonely, and expressed a wish to rejoin her. In turning to retrace their steps, they met face to face with Archer Clifton and his companion. Major Clifton recognized the poor mountain girl in that saloon, with a look of supercilious surprise, and Mrs. Georgia looked calmly through her body without seeing her at all. With a slight bow, Major Clifton passed on with his companion. And as for Kate, her heart had a habit of standing perfectly still in an emergency, and now it had stopped so suddenly, and stood still so long, that she was on the verge of fainting.

"You are not well. You are wearied. You have remained on your feet too long. Let me take you to a seat, Miss Kavanagh," said the Colonel. With a gasp and a shiver, Kate recovered and rejoined Mrs. Clifton. And she permitted herself to fall into no more weakness that night. But Kate had unconsciously betrayed her secret to the officer. And by the interference of her good angel, this knowledge thus obtained, enabled Colonel Conyers to do Kate a service of vital importance in after years.

"Archer is come," said Mrs. Clifton, as Catherine took her seat.

"I know it. I met him," replied Catherine, and both fell into silence, for at that instant Major Clifton and the beautiful Georgia passed them. And from that time, and so long as they sat there, again and again in the slow revolving of the great circle of promenaders, the pair passed and repassed them—Georgia smiling, cooing, murmuring, in her low, alluring music—and Archer Clifton, bending over her with his brilliant gray eyes, feeding on her lovely face, seeming to sink deeper and deeper into the pathos of her charms, while Carolyn turned sick with jealousy, and Catherine faint with dread, and the correspondent of the Fiddle-de-dee made a note of the distinguished favor with which the most beautiful Mrs. C———, the reigning belle of Richmond, received the devoirs of her distant relative, the celebrated Major C———. Fear nothing, Carolyn, or Catherine, Archer Clifton is not in love with his uncle's widow—that very relation would repel the idea, if nothing else. But he is not indifferent to the honor of monopolizing the reigning queen of the ton.

"Aunt Cabell," said Carolyn, "I cannot sit up longer. I *must* go home."

And Mrs. Cabell consented to gratify her wish. In fact, it was growing late, and the ultra-fashionables, the last to come, and the first to leave, were beginning to disappear. Mrs. Georgia unwillingly discovered this fact, but she thought that at least she could adroitly secure the services of her companion as an escort home, and detain him to any hour in the little paradise of her own boudoir. She therefore expressed herself ennuyée'd, and entreated Major Clifton to conduct her to the

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cloak-room. He attended her thither. And there he met again his Cousin Carolyn. She looked so fair, so wan, so fragile, that he could not for a moment take his eyes from her. He hastily adjusted the mantle over the shoulders of Georgia, handed her her muff and hood, and excusing himself for a moment, hurried back to his mother's side.

"You have company home, madam, have you not?"

"Certainly, Archer. I should not be here without such a provision—here comes Colonel Conyers now to attend us."

"Good-night, then! I will see you early to-morrow! Good-night, Kate!" He was off.

Mrs. Cabell and Carolyn, leaning on Major Cabell's arms, reached their carriage door. The Major dropped his cousin's arm a moment to assist his mother in, and to settle her in her seat. And during that moment Carolyn felt an arm passed around her waist, and a voice whisper—

"Carolyn—my beloved cousin! my bride! am I forgiven?"

She burst into tears and dropped her proud head on his bosom, exclaiming—

"Oh, Archer! am *I* forgiven?"

He placed her in the carriage, and springing in past Major Cabell, took the seat by her side, leaving the Major to follow as he could, and forgetting the very existence of Mrs. Georgia.

Kate was close to them—she saw and heard it all. Nodding her head slowly several times, she murmured—

"Thank God. Thank God! Oh, Merciful Father, help me to say that sincerely. Thank God!"

Three weeks after this they were married. The ceremony was performed in the ancient church of St. John's on Richmond Hill—one of the oldest places of worship on the whole continent. Mrs. Cabell would willingly have made this event the occasion of a great deal of ostentatious display; but the recent afflictions in the family, and the fragility of the bride, rendered other arrangements necessary. Therefore, immediately after the ceremony, which came off at an early hour of the morning, the newly-married couple, taking advantage of the very fine weather, departed for Norfolk, with the intention of sailing thence to Havana, where, by the advice of an eminent physician, for the re-establishment of the bride's health, they purposed to spend the winter.

Mrs. Georgia Clifton, with all the other members of the family connection, had, of course, been present at the marriage. And no one was so lavish of smiles, tears, caresses, and congratulations, as the dark-eyed syren. But when all was over, and the bridal pair had departed, refusing the invitation of Mrs. Cabell to go home and dine with a party of friends, she hurried to her lodgings, pushed open the door of her luxurious boudoir, fastened it on the inside, and threw herself down, rolling over, tearing at the carpet, and gnashing her teeth in an agony of disappointment, jealousy and impotent rage.

But not long did the Circe of Richmond yield herself up to

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anguish and despair. Christmas was approaching, when she was expected to entertain a select number of her worshippers at White Cliffs. It was expedient that she should go down a few days in advance of the party, to make ready for their reception. Therefore, about five days after the marriage, she left the city.

Mrs. Clifton remained a week longer in town, to give Catherine an opportunity of attending a course of lectures on Moral Philosophy. And their escort every evening was Colonel Conyers.

CHAPTER XXII.

LIFE'S VARIOUS PHASES.

Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play,
For some must watch while some may sleep,
So runs the world away.—SHAKSPEARE.

IT was always Mrs. Clifton's rule to spend Christmas at home—so she arranged to leave Richmond on the twenty-third. It was three o'clock on the dark, cold, winter morning, that the stage called for them. Our travellers were muffled up to the ears in hoods, cloaks, shawls and furs, and when they entered the coach, they seemed to fill up all the back. It was so dark that they could see nothing, and the stage seemed to be vacant of other passengers than themselves; until Mrs. Clifton, settling her own outer garments, spoke, cautioning Catherine to fold her cloak carefully about her. Then another voice spoke, from the opposite seat, exclaiming, in a tone of surprise and pleasure—

"Why, is it possible! Mrs. Clifton and Miss Kavanagh?"

"Yes, Colonel Conyers, and I am as much pleased as surprised to find you here! How comes it that we are fellow travellers?" said the lady, placing her own in his offered hand.

"And how do you do, Miss Kavanagh?—really, I am so overjoyed to find you here! Why, you must know, my dear Mrs. Clifton, that I have been due at White Cliffs for several days. I am, in fact, the laggard of a party—but in truth I could not tear myself from Richmond, while you and Miss Kavanagh remained. But last night, after taking leave of you, as I supposed, for some length of time,—under great depression of spirits, Miss Kavanagh,—I sent and had a place taken in this stage, for L———, which I understand to be the nearest stage station to White Cliffs. Why, how little did I suspect that we were to travel by the same coach! Truly, 'life is full of paper walls.' A word dropped by either of us, last night, would have revealed the fact to the other! But how delighted I am, Miss Kavanagh! And may I hope, Mrs. Clifton, that our journey lies for some distance together?"

"For the whole distance, I am happy to say. The planta-

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tion of White Cliffs and the farm of Hardbargain join. Our journey terminates at L———."

"Really! Why this is excellent! So, instead of being separated, we shall travel all the way together, and then continue to be neighbors for some weeks! Miss Kavanagh, I am overjoyed."

There was not much travelling at that season of the year, so our party of three had the coach to themselves, and Colonel Conyers devoted himself with great assiduity to the comfort of the ladies.

At the end of the second day, just as the level beams of the setting sun were gilding all the village windows, the stage rolled into L———.

There, before the little tavern door, waited Mrs. Clifton's old-fashioned carriage.

"Did you notify the family of White Cliffs of your intended arrival here to-day?" asked Mrs. Clifton, of Colonel Conyers.

"No, madam! My journey was resolved upon so suddenly—out of 'my grief and my impatience' at the supposed loss of your own and Miss Kavanagh's society—that I had no time to write."

"Ah! that is the reason why their carriage is not waiting for you. Colonel Conyers, if you will take a seat with us to Hardbargain, and rest for a few hours or a few days as you please, we shall be very glad, and we shall furnish you with a conveyance to White Cliffs whenever you wish to go."

Colonel Conyers expressed himself but too happy to accept Mrs. Clifton's invitation, and they all entered the old-fashioned carriage, and set out for Hardbargain. The farm was nine miles distant, and the road the very roughest, even of mountain turnpikes. Colonel Conyers ventured to wonder how any carriage could stand it, and surmised that R—— Country must be blessed with the best wheelwrights in the world—to which Mrs. Clifton replied that they *had* the very best to be met with anywhere.

It was ten o'clock at night when they reached Hardbargain, but they found the hall lighted up, fires blazing in the parlor, and the dining-room, and a substantial supper waiting for the order of the mistress. The farm-house looked cheerful, hospitable, and inviting; and Colonel Conyers rubbed his hands in delight. He remained over night. The next day was Christmas, and nothing but the binding engagement to render an account of himself to the beautiful Georgia at least by Christmas, could have forced him to White Cliffs that day. He accepted Mrs. Clifton's cordial invitation to come over often while he remained in the neighborhood. In fact, Mrs. Clifton had seen that Colonel Conyers was very much pleased with Catherine, and she felt desirous that he should have an opportunity of winning the affections of her favorite. Colonel Conyers took the largest advantage of Mrs. Clifton's hospita-

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lity, and not even the charms of the syren of White Cliffs, could wile him away from his daily evening ride over to Hardbargain. And so, after a few weeks—as there is no accounting for tastes, and as the most extraordinary things sometimes really do happen—it turned out that Colonel Conyers actually did lay his heart, hand and fortune at the feet of the humble girl whom his own subordinate officer, Captain Clifton, had despised, and, furthermore, that he was rejected by her! Yes! gratefully, kindly, but firmly and finally rejected! And full of disappointment, humiliation and sorrow, the gallant Colonel abruptly concluded his visit, and returned to town.

"Oh, Catherine, my dear, if you could but have liked him well enough to have married him. He is an honest, kind-hearted man," said Mrs. Clifton, with a sigh of regret.

"Yes, he is a good man. Heaven bless him with a good wife," answered Kate.

Neither of these unworldly women once reverted to the advantages of rank resigned with the rejected lover.

And soon Catherine had other thoughts and occupations than those connected with courtship and marriage. The situation of her grandfather demanded all her care. For many months before this, the long and persevering efforts of the patient girl had been blessed with success, and the old man had abandoned the use of intoxicating spirits. But within the last few weeks the total disuse of the stimulant to which he was morbidly accustomed, had begun to produce the most dangerous effects upon his aged and infirm frame. He grew weaker and still weaker, until at length he was confined to his bed. And so he slowly sank and failed, as weeks—weary weeks—dragged on to months. And through all this dreary time, day and night, Catherine faithfully nursed him. Many a night she sat the only watcher by his bedside, hourly expecting his death; and many a morning he revived again, so deep a hold had life upon that old, worn body. Scarcely for necessary food or rest would Catherine leave him, always watching, waiting on and cheering him; sometimes—whenever he desired it—reading the Bible to him, singing or praying with him. In vain Mrs. Clifton noticed the care-worn, toil-worn, emaciated countenance of the girl, besought her to take care of her own health. Catherine cared for nothing on earth so much as the aged man daily fading away from her sight. And so passed the winter. And so opened the spring. And then his old disease, if it could be called a disease, took a most alarming turn. After a paroxysm more violent than ever had come on him before, he fell into a state of greater prostration. And the physician hastily summoned, declared that another such attack would be fatal, and that only the use of brandy could ward the fit off, and save his life. Carl Wetzel replied that he felt if he should taste the intoxicating liquor again, the fatal appetite for alcohol would return upon

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him with tenfold violence for the temporary abstinence, and that it would totally subject him to its dominion. The doctor called him a fool and a fanatic, without self-control or self-reliance, and left him to his fate. When the physician had left the hut, the old man called his grand-daughter to his bedside.

"Kate, you heard what the doctor said?"

Kate nodded—her heart was too full for speech.

"My dear child—my dear, good Kate!—he says that unless I drink brandy I shall die. But, Kate, if I taste brandy again, I feel I shall live——a drunkard! Kate, I know you are wise and good beyond your years. Kate, I have full faith in you! My child, I will do as you decide for me. Darling, shall I drink or die?"

Kate sank upon her knees by his bedside, took both his venerable hands and kissed and pressed them to her bosom, bowed her face over them, and wept in silence. At last, raising her head, she gazed earnestly, reverently, lovingly in the old man's face, and answered—

"Dearest grandfather, do not ask me, a poor, weak, erring girl! Dearest grandfather, ask God!"

The old man feebly raised his hand, and placed it on her head and blessed her, adding—

"I thank Thee, oh, Father! that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise!"

The next morning, when the doctor came, he found the old man sinking fast, yet clinging as human nature will cling, to the wish for—the hope of—life.

"Doctor, is there no other way of saving me than that you spoke of?"

"None whatever, my good friend; unless you consent to save yourself by taking alcohol, you must die."

"Then I will die!"* replied Carl Wetzel.

And within a week from this time the old man died and was buried.

After the funeral was over, Mrs. Clifton invited and urged Catherine to come and take up her permanent residence at Hardbargain. There were now no reasons why Catherine should not, and many why she should, accept this very advantageous offer.

Her brother Carl was about to bring home a wife, after which he would no longer need Catherine's services. And now that the spring had fully opened, Mrs. Clifton's health, as usual at that season, failed, and she really needed the companionship and care of our unprofessed Sister of Charity. And, therefore, Catherine accepted her proposal, and came to take possession of the room Mrs. Clifton had fitted up for her, adjoining her own chamber. It had once been Archer Clifton's room. That was of no consequence to Catherine now, however. You need not now be told again that the

* A Fact.

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girl was a true Christian. She had great faith—she believed in miracles, asserting that the days of miracles had not passed—could not pass until the days of God's Omnipotence and man's faith should be passed. When the passion of her heart was about to become the sin of her soul, she prayed to God to remove the last vestige of that erring, ill-fated love—and it was removed—gone! She could think of him, speak of him, without an altered pulse. She knew that he and his wife were soon expected at White Cliffs, and she felt that she would meet them again without any other emotion than pleasure. On the day of her removal to Hardbargain, Mrs. Clifton said to her—

"Catherine! I see by the Richmond Standard, that Archer has resigned his post in the army."

"It is not possible, madam!"

"Yes, indeed. I was very much astonished to see it."

"What in the world could have been his motive?"

"I cannot even form an idea. No motive was assigned in the paper."

"And did he never mention his intention to you in any of his letters?"

"Never, Kate. But indeed, I have not heard from him for six weeks. I cannot tell the reason why he does not write. Perhaps his letters have been lost—the foreign mails are so irregular."

"Was he at Havana when you heard from him last, madam?"

"Yes, Catherine—but then he spoke of a speedy return home. They should have been here long before this time, or at least, he should have written to account for their delay. I send Henny regularly to the post-office—I have sent her to-day. I hope I may get a letter, though the chances seem to diminish."

Even while they spoke, the girl came in with a letter in her hand. Mrs. Clifton took it and looked at it, saying—

"At last! It is from Havana, Catherine, from Archer."

She opened it, and as she read it, her face became very grave. And having finished, she fell into thought, and said—

"It is as I feared."

"I trust there is no bad news, madam?" said Catherine.

"You shall hear, Kate," replied the lady, taking up the letter and reading as follows:

"HAVANA, May 1, 18—

"MY DEAR MADAM—

"I have to entreat your forgiveness for a silence of four or five weeks. I know that you will pardon the seeming neglect when you are advised of the cause. Every moment of my time for the last month has been taken up in attendance upon the sick couch of my dearest Carolyn. Since the opening of the spring, her health, for the last year so fragile, has fearfully failed. I have had the best medical advice to be

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found on the island, but her illness has baffled their utmost skill. They have recommended me to take her to the South of France. In order to do this, I have been obliged to resign my commission in the army. You have doubtless seen my resignation announced in the papers. I suppose the unsettled business of the White Cliffs estate must also suffer by my absence at this time. But what is that—what is anything! all things! in comparison to the health of my beloved Carolyn! I write in great haste, on the very eve of sailing, for we go on board the Swallow, bound from this port to Marseilles, to-day.

"With undying respect and affection,

"ARCHER CLIFTON."

"That is very distressing! Alas! then is life made up of nothing but vain desires and blighted hopes—of sorrow and sickness and death?"

"I knew it would be so, Catherine—that was a secret reason I had for not meddling this last time in bringing about a reconciliation between Carolyn and Archer. I have known for two years past that she was following her mother. All those Gowers die early of consumption."

"But, madam, let us hope better things. This sea voyage and residence in the South of France, may restore her."

"Never, Catherine. And it was even cruel in the doctors to send her there, to die in a foreign land, among strangers. They had better have sent her home to the scenes of her childhood and youth, where we could have cheered and nursed her. Catherine, I feel very sad."

The tears were rolling down Kate's face. The fountain of consolation in her heart was almost dry—and again she had to lift her heart to the Divine source of all strength and light for new faith and hope. Little else but suffering and sorrow had the girl seen since she came into the world—and no part had she filled in life but that of servant, nurse, or comforter.

The summer passed with Mrs. Clifton and Catherine in almost uninterrupted retirement. They heard, at long intervals, from Major Clifton and his bride, and then the news was various and unsatisfactory. Sometimes Carolyn was better, and there would be a talk of speedy return, and, perhaps, the very next letter, after a long interval, would speak of a season of prostration by extreme illness. And about the middle of the autumn, Mrs. Clifton received a letter from her son announcing their intention of wintering in Lisbon. The irregular arrivals of these bulletins were the most interesting, and nearly the *only* interesting events of the summer and autumn, if we except a descent upon White Cliffs by Mrs. Georgia and her friends. The syren, after her return from a summer tour to the fashionable watering places, determined to fill up the dull interim before the commencement of the season in town, by a visit to her "seat in R———." as she persisted in calling

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White Cliffs. Accordingly, she made up a party of idle ladies and sporting gentlemen, and came down to spend September.

Colonel Conyers was among the guests. He renewed his visits to Hardbargain, and his suit to Catherine—received a second rejection, and hurried off to town, under the sting of mortification as before. At the first of October, the "city riff-raff," as the old family servants of Clifton irreverently and indignantly called the moneyed aristocrats, returned to Richmond, whither they were shortly followed by their beautiful hostess, to prepare for her winter campaign. From this time to the middle of December, no event marked the even tenor of the life at Hardbargain. The inmates had not lately heard from Major Clifton. It was near Christmas. In her anxiety to hear from Lisbon, Mrs. Clifton was in the habit of sending to L——— twice a week, when the mail came in, and sitting up till a very late hour, waiting for the return of the messenger.

One evening after supper, Mrs. Clifton and Catherine sat each beside their work-stand, before the fire, awaiting the arrival of the boy who had been dispatched to the post-office. So often had the lady thus sat and waited, and been disappointed, that hope waxed very faint. This time, however, she was destined to have her heart gladdened by the full fruition of hope. About nine o'clock the messenger returned and entered the parlour with a packet of letters and papers. The boy's face was lighted up with sympathetic joy, and he exclaimed, as he handed the bundle—

"I almos' rid myself to death, mistess, I was so glad I had de letters to bring yer."

"You have made great haste indeed, Neddy. Go tell Henny to give you your supper," said the lady.

"Good boy!" said Kate, pressing his little sooty hand as he passed her and went out.

Mrs. Clifton was reading a letter from Archer. It was written in a glad, buoyant spirit and contained the best possible news. Against all hope, Carolyn's health since her arrival at Lisbon had steadily improved, and it was now so far re-established, that they were already looking forward to their voyage at the earliest opening of spring. Carolyn had gained flesh and color as well as health, and strength and cheerfulness, and was looking far better than she had looked since his first meeting her again at Richmond. Mrs. Clifton repeated all this to Catherine, adding—

"It is true, Kate, that none of her family who have perished by her disease ever tried a change of climate, and although in most cases such a change hurries the patient to the grave, yet, in some instances, it seems to work wonders in the way of cure; and who knows, if Carolyn is so greatly benefited, that she may not get over this danger, and if not positively cured, yet live to a good old age, and die at last of something else, as I have heard of consumptives doing."

"I'm so glad!" Catherine sat with her face suffused with

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the flush, and her eyes filled with tears of sympathizing joy and thanksgiving. After reading and re-reading the letter, and dwelling on it, and talking of it, Mrs. Clifton finally unfolded the paper, the Richmond Standard, and running her eyes over its columns, suddenly exclaimed—

"Catherine, 'When joys come they come not as single spies but in battalions'—here is excellent news of an old friend—listen—only two or three lines among the 'items' of a newspaper column, yet of what great moment to many—hear." And the lady read :—"At the conclusion of the recent treaty of peace between this government and the Shoshonowa Nation, among the prisoners held to ransom was the gallant Captain Fairfax, supposed to have fallen under their tomahawks, at the massacre near Fort Protection. This brave but unfortunate officer is now understood to be on his way to the seat of government."

Catherine was positively speechless with joy; only her clasped hands and fervent countenance revealed what she felt. In the great, though calm surprise and rejoicings over the event, these friends forgot its singularity, until after a long while Catherine exclaimed—

"Poor Zuleime! Oh, how *could* such a fatal misrepresentation have been made of the case? It was reported that he was cloven down from his saddle, and then butchered!"

"It was not a wilful misrepresentation. It was a misapprehension. The few who escaped to tell the tale of the massacre, no doubt had seen him struck down; and don't you see in the terror and confusion, they imagined the rest—knowing perfectly well that scalping and rifling the bodies are the almost invariable custom of the savages? And then remember, Catherine, the body taken for the corpse of Captain Fairfax, was so rifled and mutilated, as to be unrecognizable, except upon circumstantial evidence."

"So indeed it was said to be! I would the mistake had never been made though! It killed Zuleime!"

"Catherine, my child, I have no idea that Zuleime was really drowned."

"Madam!"

"Do you not know, Catherine, that any body drowned in that part of the river where the supposed signs of her suicide were found, must have come to light. Don't you know that the current is very rapid there, and that a ledge of rocks crosses the river a few yards below it, upon which her body must have been thrown, if she had been in the river at all? And, Catherine, if I have never breathed this thought before, it was upon account of poor Carolyn. I knew that in her weak, depressed state of mind and body, she could better bear the belief of Zuleime's death, than the frightful uncertainty of her fate. You are discreet, Kate; you will not breathe this to Carolyn, or to any one, lest it should reach her ear."

"Never! And do you know, dear Mrs. Clifton, I have

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sometimes had the thought that Zuleime might yet be living —and I dared not indulge the hope secretly—much less breathe it aloud."

"And what was *your* reason for such a supposition, Catherine?"

"Why my thought was not well founded—so logical as yours. I knew nothing about the peculiarities of the river. My thought was only a vague hope, and it agitated me so much as to interfere with my practical duties. I had to banish it."

"You are so sensitive, so sympathetic, my dear girl. Well, Kate, no more exciting talk to-night. We will return thanks to God for these glad tidings, and then retire to rest."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ZULEIME.

Among a jumbled heap of murky buildings.—KEATS.

ZULEIME had been placed by Georgia under the care of a poor woman, the wife of a carver and gilder, who had occasionally worked for her father. And as long as the funds of the belle had held out, the trifling expenses of such poor board and lodging had been regularly paid. But when the syren was reduced to support her own extravagance entirely by credit, founded upon the false reputation of wealth—her small remittances to her protégée, or rather her victim, ceased. Zuleime was afraid to seek her, afraid to write to her—there was nothing she feared more than discovery, and the recognition of her hand-writing on the superscription of a letter might have led to that. It was long after the death of her father before she heard of it—nor then did she hear any of the particulars of time, place or circumstance. The fact came to her knowledge irregularly, through the report of the transcendant charms and conquests of his beautiful young widow. A long and dangerous illness was the result of this sudden news. It was some weeks after her recovery before the poor people of the house, who had long despaired of getting anything for her board, could find it in their kind hearts to ask her to seek another home. And even then they sent a sigh after the desolate young widow—the child who went forth carrying in her arms another child. And how she lived during the interval between that and the period at which I shall again introduce her to you, I cannot tell. Sometimes a little fine needle-work came to her hands; sometimes a spell of want, reaching almost to starvation; then a little assistance from neighbors; and a little going in debt to shopkeepers. And then she always lodged with the poor. And the poor seldom persecute the poor; remember that the needy family who first sheltered her, had been for months at the sole expense of her food, lodging, and long illness—and yet they

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had never reproached or persecuted her for unpaid debts—though they scarcely refrained from reproaching themselves for sending her away.

In a quiet, back street, mostly inhabited by very humble people, in the middle of the square, and fronting immediately upon the battered pavement, stood an old two-story brick house, occupied by a poor cabinet-maker and old furniture dealer. The lower front room was used as the ware-room, and crowded and piled up with every description of miserably dilapidated household furniture, apparently good for nothing else under the sun but kindling wood, and scarcely worth splitting up for that. Old worm-eaten, carved mahogany bureaus and bedsteads; tables without legs and leaves; chairs without backs; cradles without bottoms or rockers; clocks wanting faces; beaufets wanting doors; sofas minus arms; smoky pictures without frames; and tarnished frames without pictures; worm-eaten cabinets, and mildewed looking-glasses; broken pots, pans and kettles; and mismatched crockery-ware in any quantity.

Reader, I do not wish to give you an inventory of an old furniture-shop, but merely some idea of the inextricable confusion in which this heterogeneous mass of worn-out, broken, worm-eaten, mildewed, fly-stained, dust-clothed, cobweb-veiled items, were piled up from floor to ceiling. It would make your heart and head ache with wondering what sort of a living could be picked out from so much dirt, disorder and decay—and who on earth could be the patrons of the establishment. You would unconsciously gather close about you your most worthless dress in passing through the shop, and look up in involuntary dread of a broken head or limbs, by the fall of some of those dilapidated, ill-balanced, old chairs and tables.

The family of the chair-maker consisted of himself, his wife, and two daughters. They were Germans, with the usual talent of that race for money-getting and money-keeping. And the man made at least a hundred per cent. on every old, rickety, worm-eaten bureau or table that, mended and varnished, left his shop. They added to their income, by letting the rooms of their house, and occasionally by taking a profitable boarder.

It was in the early part of the same autumn which found her sister Carolyn in Lisbon—and Mrs. Clifton and Catherine alone at Hardbargain, that Zuleime became a tenant of the German cabinet-maker. She occupied the back room on the second floor; the two daughters of the family using the front room as a sleeping apartment. She had the use of the street passage door, and so reached her room without passing through the shop or any part of the house occupied by the family or their boarders. The refinement in which she had been born and bred, was not lost amid her bitter poverty. It constrained her to seek privacy of life at least. She sup-

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ported herself and child, just now, by doing fine needle-work for some ladies on a transient visit to the city. But the work was precarious, and the supply might be cut off at any moment. Her expenses were small, however, and her economy wonderful. Her neat, but poorly furnished room, cost her but ten shillings a month; a bushel of meal and a pint of salt, five shillings; milk for the child two shillings; fuel, eight shillings; washing, three shillings; candle-light, two shillings; and the attendance of a boy to bring water and cut wood, three shillings—making the sum total of her monthly expenses only one pound, fourteen shillings, or a little more than six dollars. Her only food was mush or corn-cakes prepared from the meal. She could not have kept up very long under this regimen; indeed, although she knew it not, she was slowly dying of a disease as common as lingering, and as universally ignored as that of a broken heart—namely, innutrition or slow starvation. Her German hostess, kind-hearted, notwithstanding her money grasping propensities, often sent her a bowl of "noodle soup," with a little plate of "sour-krout," and a tumbler of schnapps, or some such combination of German luxuries. But Zuleime, who managed to exist upon coarse food, could not endure gross food, and she would turn away from such, scarcely able to conceal the sickness the very odor so appetizing to a Dutch stomach, excited in hers. Still her refusal of the viands was couched in words so gentle and grateful, as never to offend her landlady. Some of my readers may wonder why Zuleime did not do her washing, water-drawing, etc., with her own hands, and take the money paid for having those things done, and buy better food? Because, for one reason, she had not the requisite physical strength or skill—and besides, perhaps, she shrank from the exposure necessarily incurred in these labors. She had not in these two years, forgotten the delicacy and refinement in which she had been nurtured. On the contrary, everything in her appearance and manners, betrayed the gentle-woman. She had but one dress in the world—all the others had been cut up to make clothes for her little girl. Her sole gown was black bombazine, which she had worn daily for nearly two years—yet so good was its original quality, and so well had it been preserved, that it was now neither rusty nor thread-bare. It was shaken out and hung up every night, and well brushed and spunged every week. This dress, with the little inside 'kerchief of linen, was always neat and lady-like. Zuleime's fine needle-work gave out—as she knew it would—and she found herself without employment, or funds. It was then that Bertha and Wilhelmina Erhmientraut, the daughters of her landlord, told her of a German clothier on Main street, who had advertised for a number of needle-women to make vests. Zuleime confessed her total ignorance of that branch of needle work. But the kind German girls promised that if she would procure the

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work, they would give her some instructions how it should be done. Zuleime gratefully accepted their offer, and prepared to set out on her long walk by donning the little black bonnet and shawl, as neat and as well preserved as her dress had been. She could not further tax the kindness of her landlord's family by leaving her child in their care, she had been obliged to put the little one to sleep, and lock it up in her room, only leaving her key with her landlady—"in case anything should happen" while she was gone. It was a long, weary tramp to Main street, where the clothier's store was situated. When she entered the show-shop and made her business known, she was directed into a back room, where a man behind a long table, was engaged in cutting out garments—and many bundles of cut out but unmade clothes, tied around with skeins of thread, lay piled up at one end. Zuleime walked up to this table. The foreman, as he appeared to be, laid down his shears and looked up, saying deferentially—

"What did you wish to look at, madam? Mr. Schneider, attend this lady."

"You are in error. I do not wish to look at your wares. You advertised work to give out; can I have some?"

The tailor looked at her again. He saw, from her gentle manners and appearance, that she was a lady, guessed from her dress that she was a widow, and knew by her errand that she was self-dependent, unprotected; so there existed no earthly reason why a coarse-minded, craven-hearted man, who spent his whole days in smirking, cringing, deprecating and deferring to others, should not refresh his soul by a little impertinence and insolence to so safe a subject as a *poor lady*.

"Did you ever make vests?" he asked, in a short, curt, insolent manner.

"No," answered Zuleime, "but I sew very neatly—unusually neatly, my patrons say—and as you cut and baste the work, very little instruction would enable me to make them very nicely."

"I shan't trust you! I have had quite enough in my time of giving out work to people who know nothing about the business."

It was not the words so much as the insulting manner of the man, that shocked the gentle-hearted woman, and she turned and left the shop, ready to sink, not so much under disappointment, though she knew not where to turn for work or money or food—but under the deeply humiliating sense of the rudeness and vulgarity to which she was forced to expose herself in this bitter struggle through the world. She walked slowly, thoughtfully, sadly away from the shop, till the sudden thought of her child's awakening, electrified her, and she hurried on until she reached home. She obtained her key from the landlady, in the basement, and entered the passage.

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It was then that she heard a very sweet, gentle voice, apparently near her room door, saying—

"Don't cry, baby! *poor* baby, don't cry! mother will come by-and-by! *Dear pretty* baby, don't cry! I'll bring you all my playthings and a little dog, when I can get in."

And then, in the pause of the child's wails and broken talk, and baby plaints, she ran up stairs at once, and there, kneeling before her door, and talking through the key-hole, was a sweet little dark haired girl of about five years old, and dressed in deep mourning. Her hat of the finest Leghorn straw, the richness of the black ribbon that bound it—the fineness of the black bombazine frock and the linen cambric tucker, the delicate shoes and stockings—the gentle, refined manner, all bespoke a child of a different rank from those seen in that neighborhood, and especially in that house. The child got up and stood aside when she saw the lady come with the key to unlock the door. When Zuleime had entered her room, and lifted the babe to her lap, she called the little girl up to her side. She was a lovely child indeed, with fair skin and delicate features—jet-black hair, eye-brows and eye-lashes, and large, mournful, dark gray eyes.

"You are a dear little girl. What is your name?" asked Zuleime, pulling her around her waist caressingly.

"Ida ——; see what a nice new black dress I've got. They gave it to me when father died. Mother wears one, too. You've got a black dress on, too! Is your father dead?"

"Yes, darling," said Zuleime, with her eyes suffused.

"Don't cry, please! Mother cries so much. I do wish she wouldn't! Is the baby's father dead, too?"

"Yes—yes, love—the baby's father is dead, too!"

"Well—*please* don't cry so! Mother says we have all got a father in Heaven! *Oh! please* don't cry so! It gives me such a—such an ache in the breast to see anybody cry so," said the child, and her mournful, but most beautiful eyes assumed a pleading, painful, almost *querulous* look.

"Who *is* your mother, sweet Ida?" asked Zuleime, to change the subject of her own and her little companion's thoughts.

"Mrs. Knight, you know, the leading lady. Did they put the baby's father in a long red box, and send him away?"

"Yes, yes, Ida. Where does your mother live?"

"She lives here, in the back room, down stairs. We came to-day. She is going to play to-night, and then I'll be by myself. Did they hold the baby up to kiss her father like they did me? And did he put his hand on her head and call her his fawn-eyed darling? That was when he was on the bed. And afterwards he went to sleep. And they said he was dead. Was that the way with the baby's father?"

"I don't want to talk about it, dear Ida. Tell me of your mother. What does she play on—the organ?"

"No! I don't know. Yes I do, too!—the stage. Look at my nice new hat. It used to have a wreath of red roses round

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it. But when father died, mother took it off and put this black ribbon there. Mother wears roses on her head, though. At night, I mean. All day long she wears black, and looks so pale and weeps. But at night, she puts beautiful flowers in her hair, and sometimes gold and fine feathers—and she has such sweet long curls and rosy cheeks—and such beautiful dresses. And father used to wear beautiful clothes at night, red and gold, and feathers. I do want to see father so much. I wish they'd bring him back. Do you think it will be long before I see him?" asked the child, as the large tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Perhaps not, my love. Is your mother an actress then?"

"Yes, that is what she is. Don't cry, now! It gives me a pain in my bosom. *Please* don't cry; if *you* don't, *I* won't," said the child, wiping her eyes. Then suddenly she exclaimed, "Oh! I forgot, I promised to bring the baby my playthings and my curly dog;" and so saying, the child ran away and scampered down stairs.

Zuleime looked in vain for her return, and finally concluded that her mother had detained her. But if the child did not come, somebody else did. Wilhelmina entered, and kindly inquired after her lodger's success in seeking work. When she learned her failure, she begged Zuleime not to be troubled, for that there was work in the house for her if she would take it. That the new boarder, Mrs. Knight, the leading lady of the Richmond Theatre, wanted assistance in making up some dresses, that were to be ready in a few days. That she, Wilhelmina, had recommended their lodger, and if the young lady pleased, she would conduct her down and introduce her to Mrs. Knight. Zuleime thanked the kind-hearted girl, and prepared to accompany her—sensible amid all her other emotions of a rustic's curiosity to see a really living actress, for she had never in her life seen one off the boards. She followed Wilhelmina down the stairs into the passage. Near the foot of the stairs was a door leading into the first floor back room. At this door Wilhelmina rapped. It was opened by Ida, who, as soon as she saw Zuleime, exclaimed—

"Oh! it's you! Come in. Mother! here is the baby's mother!"

"It is I, Mrs. Knight, with the person I spoke of. May we come in?" inquired Wilhelmina.

"Assuredly. Do so," replied the sweetest, deepest voice Zuleime thought she had ever heard. And they entered the room. Wilhelmina introduced Mrs. Fairfax, and withdrew. The apartment in which Zuleime found herself, was the best furnished room in the house—decidedly—having a good warm, hued carpet on the floor, crimson stuff curtains at the only back window, a grate with a coal fire, a four-post bedstead, with tester, net valance, and a white counterpane, a bureau with tall dressing-glass, and wash-stand, with china toilet service. But it was in a state of confusion only less than that

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of the adjoining shop. Trunks, boxes, and band-boxes of all sizes, forms and colours, some corded and piled up one above the other, and some open and boiling up and over with all sorts of finery and tinsel, satins, silks and velvets, feathers, flowers and fustian, which also trailed upon the carpet, and strewed the chairs. An oil painting, in a large heavy gilt frame, leaned with its face against the wall. On the bed, a black mantle and bonnet, with a widow's veil, lay side by side with a gorgeous scarlet velvet train, embroidered with gold, an imitation ermine robe, a crown of gilt and paste, a plume of feathers, and great bunches of sham pearls. On a low trunk, in the midst of this sad chaos of poverty and glitter, mummery and mourning, sat one who immediately drew and fixed Zuleime's attention. A tall, noble-looking woman, of perhaps thirty years of age, clothed in deep mourning, with her heavy black hair banded around her forehead and temples, and shading a countenance dark and cavernous, with its large hollow eyes and hollow cheeks, but majestic with power, earnestness and truth, and beautiful with those grand, mournful eyes, whose mesmeric spell was felt by Zuleime, on whom they were now brought to bear.

"Take a seat, Mrs. Fairfax. You find me here in great confusion, because I have but just arrived, and have had to unpack and look over all these trunks, to select and prepare no less than four costumes for the evening," said the same rich, full, deep tones, as their owner cleared a chair of spangled robes and plumes, and offered it to her visitor.

"Mother is going to wear *this* dress this evening—isn't it pretty?" said Ida, climbing upon the foot of the bed.

Zuleime turned her eyes with childish interest towards the robes; and Mrs. Knight, observing her look of curiosity, said—

"They form a portion of the Queen Katherine costume. They are going to bring out Henry VIII., this evening."

Zuleime glanced from the costume to the haggard, but noble-looking woman, and thought that she might represent the unhappy Queen very well, as far as personal appearance would go, but instead of expressing this opinion, she said—

"The young German girl told me that you wanted some assistance in needle-work. I shall be glad to help you."

The dark, mournful eyes rose slowly, and grew still, looking at the young widow, in whom they now began to recognize that most piteous of all beings—*a reduced lady.*

"Sit down—pray sit down," she said, to Zuleime, who still remained standing.

Zuleime took the vacant chair.

"Would you object, Mrs. Fairfax, to sitting with me while you sew? There are alterations to be made in these four Queen Katherine dresses, in which you would require my advice."

Zuleime hesitated, and then answered—

"I should not like to leave my little child alone, madam.

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"Let me!—let me!—let me go up and stay with the baby!" eagerly interrupted Ida, jumping down from the bed, and running up and seizing the hand of her mother.

The dark eyes sank fondly on the little one, and the rich voice—richer now with maternal love, replied—

"Certainly you may go, if the lady will permit you to do so."

Zuleime hesitated again, then said—

"Thank you. I shall be very glad. Let me go up first and make the fire safe." And she left the room, followed by Ida, who ran back first, to throw her arms around her mother's neck, and kiss her "good-bye."

When Zuleime reached her room, she placed the blower before the grate, for safety—hid away all the implements with which the children might harm themselves, and leaving the little ones at play upon the rag carpet, returned below stairs, and went to work. Her new occupation was indeed of an odd and miscellaneous description—ripping off gold lace, and sewing in its place imitation sable; trimming buskins, and lastly, making up an ancient coiffure, all under the direction of the shadowy-faced woman, who, all this time, sat upon the trunk, with a tattered play-book on her knee, studying her part.

Zuleime spoke of Ida—her beauty, her charming manner.

"Is she? Do you find her so? I thought that might be only my partiality. Poor little one! She is a great comfort and a great sorrow to me, if you can understand such a paradox."

"Yes, I can understand it," said Zuleime.

"I have to leave her all the forenoon, for the purpose of attending the rehearsals, and then, before it is time for her to go to bed, I have to leave her, alone, and go to the theatre, and be absent till a late hour of the night. And then the fear of fire, or of accident, while I am gone from her, wears me out. Worse than that, all day and night, while away from her, is the dread of her getting in the streets, and into evil company." And the eyes of the woman assumed an anxious, haggard, querulous look, as she dropped them upon her book.

"Give your little girl into my care. I am never absent from home except early in the morning—as to-day—and at that hour you are here."

The dark eyes flew up and fastened themselves upon the face of Zuleime, and the deep voice inquired—

"Would you really take charge of her for me? Oh, it is too much for you, and too good in you. I don't understand it."

"Indeed I shall be very glad to do so. The presence of a lovely child is a great pleasure to me. Leave Ida with me this evening while you are gone, and I will put her to bed when the time comes."

"For this evening I will gratefully accept your kindness;

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but you may find her more inconvenient that you anticipate," said Mrs. Knight. And then she dropped her eyes again upon her book, and Zuleime went on silently with her sewing. About sunset the work was nearly completed, and the costume, with the exception of the coiffure upon which Zuleime was still engaged, was packed in band-boxes, to be conveyed to the theatre. Then Mrs. Knight rang a little hand bell, and when it was answered by the entrance of Bertha Erhmientraut, she said,—"Please send me a lad to carry these boxes for me, and ask your mother to make me a very strong cup of coffee."

Bertha disappeared, and Mrs. Knight put on her bonnet and shawl. And soon a ragged boy appeared at the door, who agreed to carry the boxes for a sixpence. Mrs. Knight loaded and dispatched him at the same moment that Bertha reappeared with a huge cup of strong coffee, which she took and drank off, standing. Then, as she handed back the empty cup to the German girl, and received from Zuleime the finished coiffure pinned up in a paper, she said—

"That cup of coffee will give me strength to go through my heavy part to-night, but will leave me at its close more exhausted than ever; thus I discount future health and life for present bread." And so she went off, her eyes gleaming under the excitement of a stimulant narcotic, as fatal, if not as disreputable, as opium or alcohol. Zuleime went up to her own room, and prepared the frugal supper for herself and the two children, that were still playing on the carpet. She got a double portion of milk from the German people, on account of her little guest, Ida declaring that she liked milk with corn cake crumbled in it better than anything, it was so sweet. And then when the babe was undressed and put to bed, the little girl's eyes waxed heavy and dim, and Zuleime took her down stairs into her mother's room, and disrobed and washed and prepared her for bed. And when the child was about to kiss her friend and spring into bed, Zuleime said—

"Stop, Ida. Don't you say your prayers?"

"No, ma'am."

"But don't you wish to?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," said the child, and running back, she kneeled down at Zuleime's knees, and placed her little hands together and looked up for instruction.

Zuleime thought the shortest, simplest infant's prayer she knew of was the best, because readily understood and easily remembered. And so she took the little one's folded hands between her own, and bade her repeat after her—

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

"That is a sweet little verse. What *is* my soul?" asked the child.

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Zuleime hesitated, puzzled for an answer; then she said, for want of a better—

"It is what you think with, and wonder with, and what you are sorry or glad with, and what will live for ever."

"I love you with it then. Good-night, good, pretty lady."

"Good-night, sweet child." And Zuleime laid her in the bed, and kissed her fair eyelids down to slumber.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CATASTROPHE.

To die mid flame and smoke!—HALLECK.

HEAVEN knows that it is now difficult enough for a poor woman to make a living. But in the days when Zuleime lived and suffered, it was even more so. It was especially hard in Virginia, where, owing to the prevalence of the law of entail, the rich were very rich, and the poor very poor. Where, besides, ladies took pride in their domestic and industrious habits, the favorite and most inveterate of which was that of doing their own sewing, forgetful of the poor widow and orphan, who might be suffering for the want of the work. It was for such reasons that Zuleime found little or no employment—at most of the houses where she applied she was told that—"We never give out needle-work," or that, "The ladies of the house do all the family sewing." All very well, in moderation. Industry is a praiseworthy habit, when it does not compromise justice and mercy—when it does not hinder us to "live and let live." Let us be diligent in our several callings; but for Heaven's sake, if we can possibly afford it, let us never refuse to give work to those who need, or who ask it of us. They may be suffering for it, they may be starving for it, they may be dying for it, as Zuleime was. They may be driven to vice, to crime, for the want of it, as Zuleime was not, thank Heaven. Reader, this portion of my story at least is no fiction. Nor was Zuleime's case *then* a solitary one. Nor would it be such *now*. There are many poor women, in every city, who have not work enough to earn their necessary food and fuel. And this is one of the causes:—There are hundreds of ladies, of the middle classes of society, who work themselves nearly to death, and really shorten their lives, by sewing for their large families, in order to save money to lay out in dress for themselves and children, more genteel than needful; or in furniture, which they do not live very long to enjoy. And all this time there are hundreds of poor women around them suffering for a part of this very work with which *they* are killing themselves. Yes, hundreds who die annually of innutrition—a slow, cruelly slow starvation, prolonged from month to month, or from year to year, according to their relative strength of constitution. I know it. For I have lived among them, and seen for myself, and not another. The doctors call the want, of which they die, consumption—I

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think it is rather *non*-consumption. Zuleime sank deeper and deeper into penury. As autumn advanced into winter, and as her necessities increased, her ability to supply them decreased. Her poverty began to betray itself sadly in her personal appearance. Her face was thin and wan, with great, bright, hungry looking eyes—her hands wasted to semi-transparency. Her only gown, her black bombazine, was rusty and threadbare, and embossed with darns—her shoes were so bad as to look scarcely decent. And amid all her other troubles, there was room for humiliated feelings upon even this account. The present was wretched—the future hopeless. She had heard of people perishing from cold and hunger, and to such an end she thought her life seemed tending. Yet miserable as was the condition of Zuleime, there were many then, are many now, in much worse situations. She at least was starving in a tolerably clean room, in privacy and in peace. Far happier than some who perish in the midst of vice and filth and squalor. Yes, reader, there are such things; they *do* exist in my neighborhood, and yours, and it is just as well that they should sometimes be remembered. Zuleime was dying of want. And did the people of the house know nothing of this? Yes, they knew something of it, and her German landlord trembled for his rent, his wife wished that they had never seen the poor thing, and the two girls pitied her very deeply. And Mrs. Knight saw it all, and suffered in sympathy, and gave the poor, dying girl, all the work she had to give, and paid her for doing it as liberally as she could afford. But Mrs. Knight was not able, from her scanty salary, to keep up her expensive, professional wardrobe, and support two families besides. The greater part of the money Zuleime made, by sewing for the poor actress, was paid for rent, to keep the roof over her head that bitter weather, and to supply the daily two-pence worth of milk for the child. If a few pence were left over, they were spent in cheap pilot bread, sparingly eaten by herself. For weeks together she had no fire, no fuel, but would manage to keep her child warm by seating her in the middle of the bed, well wrapped up. By the side of the head of the bedstead, and looking to the south was the only back window of her room. When she had work, she would sit by this window and sew, while her child sat wrapped up in the bed. When she had no work, she would still sit there and rock her child upon her bosom, singing to her all the while. Unearthly and spiritual was the wan, moonlight face, with its large, luminous eyes—unearthly and spiritual was the voice in which she sang her child to rest, as she sat by the south window. She found room in her burdened heart to love that sunny window, with its glimpses of a river landscape, with waterfalls and hills and forests, and nearer, lying between her and the water, the pleasure-grounds around a fair mansion of white freestone, that fronted on the river. That fine place took in nearly a whole square, and was separated

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from this poor house and lot, first, by a broad, back alley, then a tall brick wall, with capacious stables and coach-houses, then the garden, with terraces and conservatory, and so up to the venetian back piazza of the mansion. Every day, and all day long through the glowing autumn weather, she had sat and feasted her eyes and mind upon these pleasure-grounds, with their gorgeous flowers and magnificent trees, and the palace-home in the midst, a picture of beauty and glory, telling besides of plenty, elegance, refinement, leisure, artistic taste, intellectual pursuits, family union, domestic happiness. Many a time, when going out to look for work, she had walked quite around the square to get in front of the mansion, and satisfy her soul with the architectural beauty and elegance of the edifice, as it stood elevated by a flight of terraces far above the street, and commanding for many miles the mighty course of the river. Often in the autumn weather, had she walked under this southern wall, and even in the midst of her deep distresses, looked up in childish longing at the splendid autumnal flowers, trailing luxuriantly over the iron railing. Why did this place interest her so? Not because it was a palace-home, in such strong contrast to her own poor dwelling —not because she passed it almost every day—not because its magnificent grounds were ever before her sight from her own poor room. Ah, no! But because there was a rural character, and a fine, old, ancestral look about the place, that reminded her of her dear, lost home. Everything connected with the premises interested her, even that capacious family carriage, with its round bodied, gray coach horses, and its fat coachman, which appeared every afternoon at a certain hour to take the family out to drive. She did not care to inquire who lived there. One day, when walking in front of the house on the other street, she had seen a lady in deep mourning come out and get in the carriage. She had time to see that the lady appeared bowed in grief, but possessed so sweet and benevolent a face, that she was encouraged to call and ask for work. So the next day she entered the beautiful grounds, and ascended the stone steps that led flight by flight up the rising terraces until she reached the Grecian portico and rang the bell. The door was opened by a man servant, to whom she communicated her business. He called a waiting-woman, who came, and after hearing what the visitor wanted, explained civilly enough that all their needle-work was done by a young person, who lived companion to her mistress, who was too infirm to see strangers. Zuleime never tried there again. But the sweet, sorrowful face of the lady haunted her, and she gazed from her poor window upon the magnificent pleasure-grounds with more of interest than ever.

Truly the world *is* "full of paper walls." How little Zuleime surmised that the mourner in the palace sorrowed over the very same bereavement that had laid her own life waste —that the fair-haired, tender-eyed lady, whose grief-worn

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countenance haunted her so, was the mother of her lost Frank; that the proud mansion house, in the midst of its pleasure-grounds, was the rightful inheritance of the poor babe that rested on her wasted bosom.

How little did the childless and desolate recluse of the palace guess that her lost son's widow sat pining, starving so near her! The world is full of paper walls, but fate makes them firmer, stronger, more indestructible than adamant.

Upon that very same December night that found Mrs. Clifton and Catherine rejoicing over the good news they had heard from their friends, upon that very night Zuleime sat shivering in her room, without fire, food, or light. She had given her child its cup of milk, and thanked Heaven that she had it to give, though she herself went hungry. And she had wrapped the babe in her shawl, and sat by the window, singing and rocking her to sleep. The room was intensely cold, she was chilled to the heart, her feet were numb, and almost lifeless. The only warmth in her body seemed to be the bosom at which the child was pressed. The snow was falling fast without, but even through its flakes she saw the lighted windows of the mansion-house glowing through the crimson curtains, and streaming redly across the snow-clad ground. And she sat and thought of the comforts within that parlor. While she sat there thinking, there came a gentle knock at her door.

"Who is there?" inquired Zuleime.

"It is I, Mrs. Fairfax," replied the voice of the actress.

"Come in, Mrs. Knight."

The actress entered, saying, with a little pardonable tact—

"Oh, you are putting your child to sleep in the dark. It is singular some little ones never will go to sleep where there is a light burning. *Is* she asleep?"

"Yes," replied Zuleime.

"Then please put her in bed, my dear, and come down stairs with me. I have something to talk to you about."

Zuleime laid her little girl in bed, and tottering with weakness, from her long fast and the cold, accompanied the actress down stairs.

Mrs. Knight opened her own room, and revealed a warm coal-fire burning in the grate, and a little supper-table set out, with coffee, French rolls, nice butter, and stewed oysters. She set the cushioned rocking-chair for Zuleime between the fire and the table, and pushed her gently into the seat, saying—

"I have holiday to-night, and for a week from to-night, because the opera troupe are here. And so I thought I would just celebrate its commencement by a supper and a ball for two!" And she placed before her visitor a plate of oysters and a cup of coffee. When the little supper was fairly commenced, Mrs. Knight said, "I did not send for you, only to take coffee with me—I wished to speak to you on a matter of

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business. I have been wishing some time to do so, but scarcely knew how to do it without wounding or offending you." She paused.

"Ah! are you so considerate? Yet you need not fear—I know *you* could not think of anything to say which would—"

"At least, I only mean your good, and if I err, you will forgive me."

"Gentle friend! I am used to all the hardness and vulgarity against which a woman has to break her heart and spirit, in struggling through the rough world. Now think of that. And think whether I can be hurt by anything your kind heart impels you to say. No, I shall be very grateful!"

"Well, this is it, then, my dear. I have not been able to avoid seeing your fruitless effort to maintain yourself and child, for the last three months. I fear you have scarcely made five shillings a week."

"I have not made that for the last month."

"And there seems to be no chance of doing better—with your needle, I mean."

"Ah no, no."

"And your situation is getting worse every day. Poor child! your very shoes are almost gone—there—forgive me—I have spoken rudely."

"No, no—you have spoken the truth in love. Any truth can be told in the spirit of love."

"And you are wasting away—you will be thrown upon your sick bed—then what will become of your child?"

"Alas, God knows! If we both die—"

"Yes, if you both *could*. Death is no evil at all." As the actress said this, her hollow, shadowy face grew dark, and her large, luminous eyes glanced aside, and fell upon the floor—fixed in an intense, suffering, almost querulous gaze—as if of one enduring pain. "It must come abruptly at last," she said, looking up, suddenly. "My dear, have you any insurmountable prejudices against a theatrical life for yourself?"

Startled by the abruptness of the proposition, Zuleime raised her eyes to the beautiful, dark, irritated countenance before her without replying.

"You don't understand me. Well, then, to put it plainer, if nothing better at all could be found for you, would you absolutely refuse to go upon the stage?"

Zuleime had understood her very well, and if she still hesitated, it was from a reluctance to wound the spirit of the actress.

"Do you, then, consider the histrionic profession disreputable?" asked Mrs. Knight, with the same suffering, querulous, almost cross expression of the eyes.

"No," said Zuleime, very gently, "I do not. Not the profession that Mrs. Siddons ennobled. I think it truly

"'The youngest of the sister arts,
Where all their beauties blend.'"

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"Well, then, my question—Would you object to going on the stage yourself?"

"I am not fit for it," replied Zuleime, evasively.

"I do not know that. I need not tell you that you are young and pretty, and singularly graceful—nor that you have a very fine voice for singing—these form a very good foundation. And in elocution, my dear, I would myself become your instructress. What say you?"

"That you are kinder to me than any one has ever been since I left home; and that I am very, very grateful," Zuleime said, very gently.

"But that you despise the calling too thoroughly to follow it, even for bread," said the actress, bitterly.

"No, no—I did not say or mean that, indeed—but I, you see, have neither the taste, talent, nor courage requisite!"

"Why not?"

"I was brought up in the privacy of domestic life; in the deep seclusion of the country. I have never been used to *society*, much less to *publicity*, and I am sure, that no matter how well I might be instructed in my part, when I should come before an audience, I should forget all about it, and half die of shame."

"Ah, I suppose you have no vocation for it. An actress forgets her own identity in that of the character she represents, and that enables her to go through things she could not otherwise endure. But, my dear, I do not see anything else you can do; and as for the 'stage fright,' as it is called among us, you would soon get that off."

Zuleime shook her head.

"My dear, you do not yet know the plan I have for you. I never thought—no one would ever think of a sudden grand début for *you*. Nothing but great genius, strong vocation, and perfect self-possession on the part of the *débutante*, would justify such a thing. No—the art must be acquired, as other arts are—slowly. This is the plan I had for you and it entirely precludes the possibility of a stage fright, since you are gradually inured to it. Do you understand me now?"

"No, I do not!"

"Well, then, for instance—and to come to the point! The opera season is about to commence, and the manager wishes to engage about half-a-dozen young girls as chorus singers. Will you be one? The lowest salary they ever give a chorus singer is six dollars a week—that is four times as much as you ever earned by the tedious needle. Will you consent?"

Still Zuleime was silent.

"After the opera season is over, I make no doubt that your youth, beauty and grace, and your very fine voice, will secure you a permanent engagement at an advanced salary. Will you go with me to the manager to-morrow?"

"No," said Zuleime, "I should not dare to go upon the stage. I could not face an audience."

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"And you need not face them! You would be in a group of young girls, and no one would notice you, except casually as a part of the scenery. The attention of the audience is taken up with the principal performers. Besides, no one will know who you are. Your name need not appear upon the bills. I will take every care of your feelings, if, indeed, you can be sensible of them when hunger and cold are felt."

"I do not like the life," said Zuleime. "I had almost as willingly starve."

The actress arose and rung the bell.

"Oh! it is nothing to me Mrs. Fairfax. Do as you please. I have no earthly interest to serve in persuading you to this step," she said, with the old, cross, querulous look on her haggard face, and in her beautiful dark, gray eyes.

Bertha came in and cleared away the table.

Mrs. Knight walked up and down the room in a hasty irritated manner.

"I wish I was at work again! I am sick of my holiday already! Since I cannot afford to abandon this hateful art, I wish I were always delving at it, and there came no pause for self-recollection. I wish I were perpetually Queen Katherine, Mrs. Haller, Isabella, Imogene, Lady Macbeth, Bianca Fazio, and the others, going incessantly through the circle like the earth through the signs of the zodiac. I wish I were always somebody else, anybody else than poor Ida Knight." And she threw herself into a chair, glancing at Zuleime with a strained, appealing, accusing look. But the wan face of the dying girl, with its hectic flush, smote the rock in her heart, and she moved to her side and took her hand and said, gently, though with the same tone and look of querulous suffering, "It *is* a wretched life! I feel it so—only it is not so bad as starving, and seeing your child starve. My dear, it *is* something to me whether I persuade you to do this thing or not. I cannot bear to see you suffer so. Your necessities weigh upon my heart in addition to my own. And really," she added, with the same frowning, irritated look, "really, I have such a burden of my own, that I grow restive under a feather of anybody else's."

"Then do not take my sorrows on your shoulders, dear lady; I can bear them myself, or die under their weight uncomplainingly. Do not take my troubles to heart!" said Zuleime, gently.

The actress looked up with a sharp, rebuking glance, saying—

"As if I could help it! You are not sincere when you ask me to do so! No, the only way I can get your griefs off my heart is to get them off your own. I must get you into *living* circumstances. I must persuade you to go on the stage with me. It is not a pleasant profession for a lady, I grant you—neither is freezing or starving, and getting into debt, and being dunned and rebuffed, pleasant—but—" she added, with a look of almost fierce self-assertion and self-defence—"neither

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is it actually *sinful*, that I know of. It necessarily transgresses no command of God with which I am acquainted. One need not be a heathen because she is an actress. Mrs. Siddons was a member in full communion with the Church of England. The stage has its dangers, I grant you, but you may safely pass through them, if you please. I have done so! I was not born or brought up to that life, my dear; I was the daughter of an English country curate—then a nursery governess—then a travelling companion to an earl's daughter—then I accidentally met with my husband, and we married from mutual affection. He was a tragedian—that is the way in which I became an actress. Now I follow the histrionic profession as the only means of living left open to me. I have seen the dangers—nay, I have *felt* them. But nightly—no matter how utterly wearied out with toil I may have been, I have uttered two lines of sincere prayer, that God would keep me from falling into deeper sin. And He has kept me! Does that surprise you? God is the God of the publican as well as of the Pharisee. Who dares excommunicate me? What child of the Universal Father shall dare to say that another is excluded from His love and care and protection? Verily, the day of Judgment will be a day of startling revelations. And many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." And then the actress fell into silence, and her fine countenance lost that look of captious self-defence, and settled into meditative earnestness.

Zuleime arose to go. Mrs. Knight took her hand, and said, gently—

"My dear, think over what I have proposed to you. If you decide to accept my proposition, I will take every possible care of you. You shall be as my own daughter. I will shield you from all dangers. I will instruct you in your art. And I will give you the freedom of my wardrobe. Good-night. Will you kiss me?"

And she drew Zuleime to her bosom. The poor girl pressed her lips to those of the actress, and slipping through the door, passed up in the dark and cold to her own room.

Ida went to bed, but the poor, generous, irritable woman could not sleep for sympathy, for anxiety, and for the sound of Zuleime's racking cough. "She will never be able to sing much, I am really afraid. But she shall be paid well for dressing, and for making her beautiful face and form a part of the pageantry—that I am determined upon, if I have any influence with the management," thought Ida, as she sank to sleep.

Rusty and threadbare clothing, broken shoes, cold, hunger, and a suffering child, are forcible arguments, and they seconded the persuasions of Ida with tremendous power.

Zuleime yielded, and was carried down the current of fate as easily, with as little resistance as the sapling beaten down by the rain, uprooted by the wind, and carried off by the flood, is whirled down the stream.

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It was the fatal night of the 26th of December, 1811, the night of the burning of the Richmond Theatre, a night ever to be remembered in the annals of that city, and ever to be mourned in the hearts of her citizens. That evening more than six hundred lovers of pleasure were gayly preparing for the theatre; not dreaming, alas! that they also were doomed to take fearful part in an awful tragedy—a tragedy unprecedented in the history of the stage. Before eight o'clock, more than six hundred persons, from pleasant city homes all around, assembled in the fated building; before twelve o'clock, more than one hundred had perished horribly in the flames! and the scarcely surviving five hundred, many wounded, maimed, or burned, all desparingly mourning the awful fate of nearest relatives and friends, returned or were borne back to their desolate homes!

That afternoon, unprophetic of doom as any of the others, Zuleime and her friend were preparing to go on the stage. Zuleime had no part to perform—she was as yet only an attaché—and was to appear but in one scene, as one of a groupe of villagers. She was engaged in fixing up a peasant dress, consisting of a straw hat, black spencer, short gray skirt, and striped stockings. Mrs. Knight was, as usual, doing two things at once—arranging her costume and studying her part. But the eyes of Ida often wandered towards Zuleime, as she heard the hacking, racking cough, and she noticed with pain the waning face. Yes! within a few days even, the thin face had become perceptibly thinner, and the flushed cheek burned with a darker crimson. "And she will make a sorry looking peasant," thought Ida; "a very sorry peasant, with that delicate, spiritual, almost aërial face and form of hers. How absurdly inappropriate are most of the affairs we get up! Truly, our art is in the rear of all others. Now, this evening, all go on as villagers—vulgar and refined—all reduced to one level. Those coarse, brawny Miss Butchers, and this fragile, delicate Zuleime, all peasants—very well for the Miss Butchers, but for Zuleime! To-morrow evening all go on as fairies; excellent well for this aërial Zuleime, but for the Miss Butchers! Well, our notions are fanciful as arbitrary—and there may be peasants who have delicate, white, semi-transparent fingers, and there may be fairies with large, flat feet, and great red hands, for aught we know." While Mrs Knight silently cogitated, and covered her white satin shoes anew, and studied her part, Zuleime worked on also in silence, but too despairing, too exhausted, even to think of the wayward fate which had brought her to this pass.

At about sunset their preparations were completed. Ida, as usual, rang for her cup of coffee and her errand boy, and packed up and sent away the costume for the evening. Then she put her own little girl and Zuleime's child to sleep together in her bed, and got Bertha to promise to look in, in the course of the evening, and see that all was safe. And then

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poor Ida carefully wrapped Zuleime up in her own mantilla, and wound her own furs around her neck, saying, in answer to all expostulation—

"Never mind *me*, my dear! I've got no cough. Haggard as I look, I'm whit-leather! *You* must take care of your poor little self."

And then they left the house, walking briskly through the biting air, and crunching the crusted snow under their quick footsteps. Though but little after sunset, owing to the heavy clouds, it was almost dark when they hurried along the streets. There was the usual number of foot-passengers abroad, and once, as the slight figure of a man in a military cloak swiftly hurried past, Mrs. Knight felt her arm suddenly grasped with spasmodic force by her companion, and turning around, she saw the face of Zuleime deadly pale.

"Why, what is the matter, my dear child?"

"Nothing, nothing!" said Zuleime; "let us hurry on."

"But you are trembling like an aspen leaf! You have walked too far—you are not strong enough for this evening's work; let me take you home again."

"No, no, no, no! let us go on!"

"Why, Zuleime—"

"Oh, it is nothing—nothing when you hear it! I—I felt the presence of one long dead! It was weak nerves, or fancy, or perhaps the prescience of one on the confines of the unseen world. Let us hasten on."

They hurried along. In the meantime, he who had passed them, the slight man in the military cloak, walked on down the square, suddenly stopped, muttered to himself, "Absurd! impossible! then went on again, again stopped, as by an irresistible impulse, turned and rapidly retraced his steps, after the two ladies in black, overtook them, was close behind them, but not placing any confidence in what he termed his own wild thoughts, he dared not accost or peep under the bonnets of two reserved and closely veiled women. But he kept them in sight until he saw them enter the side door of the theatre. Then he asked a door-keeper—

"Who are those?"

"Two of the ladies attached to the theatre," replied the man.

"Fool that I was!" exclaimed Frank Fairfax, as he turned away.

Captain Fairfax had reached Richmond that day at noon—too late, by half a day, for the stage to L———, whither he would have gone, if possible, on the wings of the wind. His mother, warned by the newspapers, had been daily expecting his arrival, and was prepared to receive him when he presented himself. He had spent the whole afternoon with her at Fairview House, and in the evening had walked out to book his place in the next day's stage for L———. It was when hurrying along on that errand, that he passed so near

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his wife, electrifying her with his unknown presence, and being himself drawn to follow, and to hover near her all the evening. For when he had turned from the theatre, and hurried on and reached the stage office and secured his place, finding out that the coach did not start till three o'clock the next morning, he said to himself—

"How on earth shall I contrive to forget some of these miserable hours that must intervene before I can fly to my wife? My mother's ill-health obliges her to retire early to bed. If I go back to Fairview House, I shall have the whole mansion to myself. I will even go to the theatre, and see if I can find out among the women there the particular one whose air and gait reminded me so strongly of my Zuleime."

And so to the theatre he went. It was quite early, and he was fortunate in securing a seat in the centre of the first row of boxes, immediately in the front of the stage. In the meantime, Zuleime had been conducted by Mrs. Knight into the theatre, and introduced into the common dressing-room of the stock actresses. This was a large room, with a broad shelf or dresser running around three sides of the walls, and about four feet from the floor. This served as bureaus, dressing-tables, and wash-stands for nine women, each of the three sides being occupied by three, who equally divided the shelf, each one having her band-boxes under the shelf, and her looking-glass on top of it, leaning against the wall, and her wash-basin, jars of rouge, boxes of powder, pots of pomatum, etc., standing around it. On introducing her companion into this apartment, Mrs. Knight said—

"All women belonging to the theatre use this as a common dressing-room, except the ballet girls, who have one to themselves, and the stars, who have separate and well furnished rooms."

About half a dozen women were present now, each before her own glass, with her own tallow candle, making her toilet.

"Who's that, Knight, that you've got there?" asked a coarse-featured, black-eyed girl, who always played the hoyden, or the wit, and fondly believed herself a proficient in the Rosalind, and Beatrice line. "I say, Knight! is that the young 'lady?'" she repeated, turning around with a little wad of raw cotton, dipped in carmine, between her finger and thumb, and exhibiting a face in process of being rejuvenated—namely, with one young and blooming cheek, and one prematurely old and sallow.

"Yes, this is the young lady, Barry," said Mrs. Knight, very gravely, as she led her protégée off to her own corner of the common dresser.

"I think she might have sent her down with the ballet girls, as she is really one of them," grumbled a large, important looking female, arranging a huge turban and curls upon her head, at the farther end of the room. Two new ideas besides that of the common dressing-room and the dressing-shelf in

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general, Zuleime had got—namely, first, that there really was some very lofty notions of rank and exclusiveness even among the members of the stock company of a second rate theatre—secondly, that they really, after all, did not differ much in that or any other respect from people she had met in very high society, except, indeed, that they had the odious habit of calling each other "Knight" or "Barry," as men do, without a prefix of any sort.

Mrs. Knight dressed herself for her part, as she was to appear in the early scene in the play, and then gave the use of her toilet nook to Zuleime. But the cold walk through the evening air, and the stand in the chilly dressing-room, had so increased her cough, that Mrs. Knight went out and sent a call-boy for opium, and administered a dose. It was under the influence of that stupifier that Zuleime, leaning on the arm of Mrs. Knight, entered that terra-incognita, the green-room. It was a long room, papered, curtained, carpeted, furnished with sofas and easy-chairs, and warmed by a fine coal fire—upon the whole it differed in no other respect than its motley crowd, from a large family parlor. Mrs. Knight conducted her to a corner of the sofa nearest the fire, and leaving her sitting there, obeyed the call-boy's summons, and went upon the stage. Composed into a dreamy state by the opium, Zuleime sat there while the strange scene, with its fantastical crowd, passed before her like the phantasmagoria of a midnight dream. And all this time Frank sat in the centre box of the front row, not seeing the play enacting before him—not thinking of it, only seeing the turnpike road to L———. Only thinking of the dearest girl in the world, whom he should meet at the end of his journing. Paper walls again!

Zuleime remained in the corner of the sofa near the fire in the green-room, not thinking at all, not even dreaming, only conscious in a vague dreamy way, that a strange vision, changing and changing like figures in the kaleidoscope, was passing before her. She was scarcely aroused by Mrs. Knight's gentle voice, saying in her ear—

"Come, my dear, it is time for you to go on now. Come, don't be afraid. Bless you, you are nobody you know. No one will look at you. You will be only one of a group that forms a sort of back-ground to the scene. Come, I will go with you to the side entrance, where the others stand."

Zuleime obeyed mechanically, and was led, between various walls of canvas, to a side entrance, at which were grouped a number of persons in villagers' costume.

"There, just go on with the crowd, and stand there; that is all you have to do," whispered Mrs. Knight, as she left her.

And at the same moment the group moved on, carrying the somnolent Zuleime with them, and she found herself in a dazzling glare of light, and heard the deafening rant of a stentorian lunged actor near her, and grew painfully conscious of the many hundred eyes upon the scene, upon herself, per-

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haps—and dared not raise her eyes an instant from the floor, upon which, with a deeply burning cheek, they were fixed. But suddenly an attraction—a fatality—I know not what—but something stronger than her fear, stronger than her will, drew her glance up to the centre box of the front row, and her eyes met Frank's eyes. Yes, there he sat, gazing at her, astonished, fixed, spell-bound as by a night-mare, without the power of moving or waking. She! she too, gazed for a moment. She was not astonished at seeing him there, any more than she would have been astonished at *dreaming* of seeing him anywhere. It was all like a wild dream, everything! It seemed not unnatural that he should form a part of it. Only to her weakened and half-stupified brain, the *last, nearest* event was the most distinct—and so, strangely, she did not think of his death or life, but only of the reproach she had brought upon *him*, her proud Frank, in appearing there! and covering her face with both hands, she sank to her knees upon the floor.

It was lucky the drop-curtain fell just then. It was lucky the audience took that by-scene for a part of the play. But to Zuleime it was still like a fever-dream, from which she tried to wake. Like a dream the drop-curtain had rolled down. But not like a dream was the rough seizure of her arm by a girl who set her upon her feet, and said, in a not unfriendly tone—

"What did you do that for? *That* warn't a part of *your* part."

"I—I—have," began Zuleime, passing her hand back and forth across her forehead, "I have been taking opium to stop my cough. I—never was used to it, and I think it has bewildered me a little; don't *you* think *so?*"

"I think *something* has! Wake up, and try to listen to what is going on. Mr. ——— is going to sing now. Come off."

As the girl led her away between the walls of canvas, one of those insignificant incidents occurred, upon which nevertheless the fate of hundreds sometimes hang. Away among the back scenes through which they passed to reach the green-room, there was a chandelier hanging flaring in the draught. A boy seemed busy with it.

"Hoist it up higher, sir, why don't you?" exclaimed one of the players, who happened to come up.

"If I do, it will set fire to the scenes," replied the boy.

"Confound your insolence, do you think I would give you the order, if there were the least danger! Do as you are directed, sir."

The boy obeyed; and the scenery instantly took fire. The chandelier was hastily drawn down; the alarm was given in the rear of the stage, and a scene shifter directed to cut the cords by which the combustible material was suspended. But the man became panic-struck and fled.

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The performers and their assistants in vain sought to tear down the scenery. The canvas was covered with a resinous composition, and the draught of wind was strong; and Zuleime and her companion were swiftly encircled by walls of blazing canvas. The strong girl, terror-stricken, left her weak companion and fled. And the poor invalid, forgotten by all in the terror and confusion, sank down overpowered, suffocated by the heat and smoke. All this had happened in less than three minutes from the raising of the chandelier.

And at this time one of the performers was playing near the orchestra, and the greater part of the stage, with its appalling danger, was fatally concealed from the audience by the curtain. The flames spread with the rapidity of lightning; and the first notice the audience had of their danger, was the fire falling from the ceiling upon the head of the performer. Even then many supposed it to be a part of the play, and were for a short time restrained from flight by a cry from the stage that there was no danger. But soon the fire flashed in every part of the house with a rapidity horrible and appalling. Then terror seized upon the hearts of all, and the audience broke up in confusion. Those in the pit escaped by the pit entrance, and were every one saved. Those in the boxes, who, had they known it, might *at first* have escaped by way of the pit, all turned and hurried towards the only door of egress into the lobby. This door was unfortunately hung to open on the inside. And this circumstance was fatally overlooked by the frenzied crowd, who pressed and pressed against the door, trying to push it open, but really keeping it fast closed. The fire advanced upon them, filling the house with suffocating smoke, and with flame that seized the clothing of those behind, goading them horribly to still more frantic pressure upon those before. The most frightful uproar ensued; women shrieking, praying—men groaning, expostulating; all crowding upon one another, or rather hundreds upon hundreds, and all pressing towards the door that would not yield. The pit was now a lake of fire, darting out huge tongues of flame that wound themselves around the forms of the hindmost, who fell shrivelled into the blaze. Then arose cries of horror, anguish and despair—children crying for lost parents, and parents calling in agony upon the names of missing children—for in the fierce pushing and struggling for life, parties got separated and families divided—children forced from the parents, women from their protectors, and the weaker unconsciously thrown down and trampled to death by the strong. Many, half roasted, dropped into the burning pit; many with their garments in flames, maddened by pain and terror, threw themselves headlong from the windows, and met another death. Many even chanced to save their lives in that way at the cost of broken limbs. And at last the door yielded; and as many as possible escaped that way; but to what a life, alas! darkened for ever by the memory of dearest relatives

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and friends who perished in the fire. The whole building was now in flames. In less than an hour all was over. Naught remained but a heap of smoking ruins; and around them the agonized crowd of those who lived and raved—and around these again, an awe-struck, mourning city.

CHAPTER XXV.

"IN PALACE CHAMBERS."

She sleeps: her breathings are not heard
In palace chambers far apart,
The fragrant tresses are not stirred
That lie upon her charmed heart.
She sleeps: on either side upswells
The downy pillow lightly prest;
She sleeps, nor dreams, but only dwells
A perfect form in perfect rest.—TENNYSON.

THE spell that bound Captain Fairfax, when he recognized his wife upon the stage, was broken by the fall of the drop curtain. He instantly left the boxes and hastened around behind the scenes. After many baffled inquiries, and many misdirections, he prosecuted his search alone, and at length found her prostrate form. The wind had blown the smoke and flame in another direction, and she lay there uninjured, though insensible, and in extremity of danger. He raised her, threw his cloak around her, ran with her into the fresh air, called a hackney coach, placed her in it, jumped in and took his seat by her side, drew her insensible form within his arms, upon his bosom, and directed the coachman to drive rapidly to Fairview House. As they passed swiftly through the streets, the cry of "Fire! fire! fire!" rung through the air, but he scarcely heard it. The rushing of crowds of people in the opposite direction to that in which they were driving, frequently impeded the progress of the carriage, but he scarcely knew it. All his senses, all his thoughts, all his emotions were absorbed in the gentle form that lay swooning on his bosom. And "Oh! how *thin* she is! how *thin*, good Heaven!" he groaned many times, as he held his arm around the fragile waist, or felt the emaciated arm and hand, or pressed his cheek against the wan face. "How thin she is, good Heaven, how thin! Is this illness? Illness unto death, perhaps! Drive fast, coachman! Fast!" He longed to lay her at rest upon her bed, that he might perchance silence his anxiety. And—"Faster, coachman! Faster!" he continued to cry, whenever the thickening crowd arrested the progress of the carriage.

At length they reached Fairview House. He lifted her out and bore her into the hall. His mother had retired to rest long since; but he rang the bell violently, and said, to the astonished servants, who came at the summons—

"Go instantly and prepare a room for my wife. I have but just saved her from the burning theatre!" The wonderstruck maids hurried to obey. "Stop! Don't disturb your mistress, on your lives," he said, and with this warning, dismissed them.

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To one of the men present, he exclaimed, "Run instantly to Doctor Cummings, and ask him to hurry hither."

The man disappeared to obey. And during the issuing of these orders, Frank Fairfax was sitting on the sofa, sustaining the fainting form of his wife with one arm, while with the other hand he unlaced the velvet bodice. Presently one of the maids returned and announced that the room was ready. And Frank raised and carried his precious burden up stairs, into a pleasant front chamber, and laid it on a bed. Then, with the assistance of one of the women, he got off the stage dress, and supplied its place with one of his mother's white wrappers, brought for the purpose by one of the maids.

He had scarcely done this, when the chamber door opened, and old Mrs. Fairfax entered, roused up by the noise in and outside the house. She came in, wrapped in a flannel dressing-gown, and saying, anxiously—

"My dear Frank! they tell me that the Richmond Theatre is on fire. I am so grateful that you are not there. Ah! what is this? Who is that!" she asked, perceiving the form of Zuleime upon the bed, and advancing towards it. "Some sufferer you have saved from the fire, my dear Frank? God bless your brave, kind heart, my dear boy. But you should not have brought her in here—or you should not be here yourself. Retire, and leave the lady to the care of myself and my women," concluded the lady, gravely.

"My dearest mother, yes! She is a sufferer I have saved from the fire! a most beloved sufferer! my wife! my wife! Dearest mother, I cannot leave her! I have a *right* to stay here."

Here followed a wild, hasty disclosure of his imprudent marriage, kept secret up to that moment. And then amid the grief and surprise of Mrs. Fairfax, he also learned the fact of Mr. Clifton's death, and of Zuleime's disappearance and suspected suicide. In bitter self-reproach, Frank had made his confession, in deepest sorrow, he heard his mother's revelations.

"How much she must have suffered! Good Heaven! how much she must have suffered! he exclaimed. Then almost madly he cried, "Mother! look at her! Look at her! Oh, tell me, do you think she can live?"

Mrs. Fairfax had been all this time chafing her temples with cologne, while the two maids rubbed her hands and feet. But up to this instant she had given no signs of recovery, or of consciousness. And the old lady shook her head mournfully, and plunged Frank into deeper despair. They persevered in their efforts for half an hour longer, and then she sighed and opened her eyes. Her husband was bending over her. She met his eyes, and smiled faintly in recognition, without astonishment, and without joy—indeed she was too feeble for either—and murmuring, "Dearest Frank," she sank away again, fainting, they supposed, until her low breathing revealed that she slept the sleep of utter prostration. And how changed was now that countenance. The look of weariness,

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care and sorrow had vanished, and the sweet, wan face wore the easy, confiding air of infancy; and even in sleep, she must have felt the shelter of protecting love around her, for often with closed eyes she smiled, as in delighted visions! All night they watched beside her bed while she slept. In the morning the doctor arrived. He had been absent all night, by the couch of one who had been severely burned at the theatre, and that accounted for his failure to come before morning; now, however, he stood beside the patient with grave and thoughtful brow.

"Doctor, for Heaven's sake give me some hope of her! Tell me something about her, at least! Is she ill?"

"She is very ill," replied the physician.

"I cannot believe it! I will not believe it! See how sweetly she sleeps! how comfortably! how free from suffering!"

"Yes—but, my dear Captain Fairfax, there would be more hope if there were more suffering—however, the case may be much more favorable than it appears to me now; I cannot fully judge of it until she wakes."

"Allow me to arouse her, then! Nay, I wish to do it! I have not spoken to her yet! Let me wake her now!"

"By no means! It might prove fatal. Indeed, you must be very careful. Her life hangs by a thread. Sleep will do her more good now than anything else. When she awakes naturally, you may send for me at once." And so saying, the doctor took leave, without even writing a prescription.

Soon after he left the house she opened her eyes again, and seeing Frank, smiled faintly, and murmured—

"My own—my dearest—dearest husband." And in an instant her senses seemed swallowed up again in sleep, which lasted half an hour, at the end of which she awoke again, and looked around in uneasiness, and breathed, half aloud,—"My child—my baby—my little Fan—" and then sank away again, as if she were too feeble to retain her hold on consciousness.

"What is she talking about, dear mother?" inquired Frank in the extremity of anxiety, when he heard her words.

Mrs. Fairfax shook her head, and said she did not know But the woman who waited in the chamber came forward, and said that if her mistress would excuse her interfering, *she* would tell them what the young lady meant.

"Speak on, then, at once, in the name of the Lord!" exclaimed Frank, impatiently.

Mrs. Fairfax endorsed his order. And then the woman informed her mistress that she had known the sick young lady all the winter by sight—that she had been there at the house to ask for sewing—that she took in sewing for a living—that she lodged at the cabinet-maker's, over the way—and that she had a little girl almost two years old, who was no doubt at the cabinet-maker's now, which she supposed was what had made the mother look around, and inquired so anxiously.

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The woman's story was scarcely over before Captain Fairfax seized his hat, and hurried from the room. As soon as he was gone, Mrs. Fairfax called the woman up before her, and said—

"Nelly, you heard your master tell me of his marriage with this young lady?"

"Yes, madam."

"I need not tell you that it is my will that there be no kitchen gossip about this matter. This young lady—once Miss Zuleime Clifton, is now, and has been for nearly three years past, Mrs. Francis Fairfax, the wife of my son, and is also your own young mistress. You understand?"

"Yes, madam."

"Then let there be no idle conversation about this marriage, if you would avoid my severest displeasure."

Further colloquy was arrested by the hurried entrance of Captain Fairfax, bringing his little wee girl in his arms. Mrs. Fairfax immediately arose to take her from him, but the child's quick eye had recognized her mother lying on the bed, and she began to clap her hands and call—

"Mamma! mamma!"

Frank held her closely, and tried to still her joyful, eager cries, but the magical sound of her child's voice had already awakened the sleeper, and she opened her eyes, and seeing the babe in its father's arms, smiled a feeble smile of content, and fell away again into oblivion.

Mrs. Fairfax had the doctor summoned again, and told him that if he wished to see her daughter-in-law awake, he must remain at her bedside, for that she only awoke to relapse instantly into slumber.

The physician then took his seat by the bedside of his patient, and requested all except a maid-servant to leave the chamber.

Mrs. Fairfax and Frank went out, taking the little girl with them, and leaving the doctor with the invalid.

After the lapse of an hour, the physician came out and went down stairs. Captain Fairfax was waiting for him in the hall, and drew him into the parlor, anxiously requesting to know his opinion. Perhaps he was really sanguine, and hoped the doctor's verdict might set his fears at rest. At any rate he insisted upon knowing the precise state of the case. The doctor gravely motioned him to sit down, and then took a seat himself. He said that his patient was not sinking so much under any local disease as under a general atrophy, for which, considering *the circumstances*, he could not possibly account—*for*, if he had met precisely such a case in the very lowest walks of life, he should at once have declared that the patient had been brought to this state by the want of proper and sufficient food—that, in short, she was dying of a slow starvation. A deep groan broke from the lips of Francis Fairfax, and he started up, covered his face with his hands, and

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walked the floor in rapid strides. Suddenly he stopped before the physician, with a countenance convulsed with grief and remorse, with all pride and hesitation gone, and exclaimed, in thrilling tones—

"Doctor! suppose her case—my wife's case had been as you would have surmised, finding it any where else?—suppose that for months past she has been starving—Great God! —*starving!*—Now that the cause of this utter failure of the vital powers is removed—now that she has every thing that wealth, that the most devoted affection can give her, may she not recruit and live? Oh! tell me?"

The physician answered sternly—

"I do not know, sir! This tampering with the laws of life —this pursuing it to the very edge of death is not safe. Is she inclined to take food at all?"

"No—only a little gruel, and that mechanically, without appetite."

"Exactly—a few days fasting makes one ravenous, but a long, partial starvation so exhausts the victim, that he loses all inclination for food, as well as all power to assimilate it." The doctor spoke severely.

"Sir! I forgive your sternness and your evident suspicions, perhaps they are partially just. If they were otherwise, God knows that I am so stricken that I have scarcely manhood enough left to resent them—but oh! tell me—do not evade the question. Can she be restored? and how?"

"Captain Fairfax, I told you that she was sinking, not so much under any local disorder as under general atrophy—and yet she *has* a local disease superinduced by this same slow starvation. Upon examination by the stethoscope, I find tubercles forming upon the left lung. There is also morbid action of the heart. You know how it is with phthisis! With proper care, and under favorable circumstances, the patient may live for years, perhaps for many years, and die at length in old age of something else."

"Oh, *no* care, *no* pains—nothing that money—nothing that love can do, shall be wanting! There is hope?"

"I dare not say there is *much* hope in this instances. This atrophy is a very unfavorable thing—all our hope is in being able to save the digestive functions. I have left a prescription, with written directions, above stairs." The doctor took his hat, and saying that he would see the invalid again in the afternoon, departed.

"All alike! all alike! They sway from right to left, raising one hopes, and then rousing their fears! He lies! he lies! It is not so! she is in no danger! Great God! she must not die! she shall not!" So unjustly, wildly, sinfully, Frank Fairfax talked, walking distractedly up and down the floor, convulsed by grief, remorse and fear for her he loved so strongly, and felt he had wronged so greatly. He dared not seek her bedside now in his excited state—he rushed into his library,

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locked the door, and gave himself up to all the power of remorse.

In the afternoon he sought the sick room again. And the deep, sweet peace that pervaded the apartment fell like a soothing spell upon his excited nerves. The front windows were open, for the day was very fine, and the fresh air and the sunshine came in together, with the cheerful view of the expanse of water, and the wooded hills across James River. The coolness of the air was sufficiently tempered by a glowing coal fire in the grate. Zuleime lay raised up with pillows on the bed, and upon the counterpane by her sat her little girl. The face of the youthful mother seemed as soft, as feeble, and as free of care and sorrow as that of the infant herself. On seeing Frank enter, she smiled a gentle, pleased, childish smile, and feebly moved her hand towards him. He went to her, at first successfully repressing all his strong emotions, and kissed her very gently, but then sank upon his knees, and dropping his face upon her hand, burst into tears, and wept passionately. Her other hand wandered playfully through his curls, and she said, gently—

"Don't weep, Frank, please don't—indeed I am happy—it is so nice to be here—don't weep."

But when men weep and sob, it is no passing shower, like the easily shed tears of women, but a great gust, shaking all the nature. So it was a long time before Frank mastered his emotion. When he recovered his composure, and arose and sat by her side and looked at her, he found that the hectic fever burned crimson on her cheeks, and that her brilliant eyes wandered about deliriously. And he knew that he had harmed her again. And soon she began to talk at random, babbling childishly, delightfully, about White Cliffs, and the forest walks, and the garden. And she addressed her father and sister, as if they were present. And very lovingly she spoke to Catherine; or, coming nearer to the present moment, talked with Ida about her feminine shrinking from appearing upon the stage. Frank listened in the deepest trouble, and in the wandering of her mind he learned much that had transpired at White Cliffs, a great deal that had occurred since her flight thence, and *all* that he ought to have known.

When the physician arrived in the evening, he instituted strict inquiries, and discovered the cause of her high fever. Then he rebuked the indiscretion of her friends, and leaving fresh prescriptions, with peremptory orders that the deepest quiet should be preserved, departed. Her fever unabated raged all night. In the morning it went off.

Captain Fairfax would not permit himself to enter her room again until he had obtained the power of perfect self-control. At about eleven o'clock he went in. The crimson curtains of the windows were drawn aside, and the room was light and cheerful. The white muslin drapery of the bedstead was festooned, and revealed the fair invalid reclining there, wan

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placid, child-like as ever. She welcomed her husband with the same soft, faint smile. And he went and sat by her side, and crushing down all strong emotions, took her hand, and spoke to her calmly and pleasantly, inquiring how she felt.

"So well—it is so nice to be here," she answered simply. And she lay there looking at him contentedly, smiling softly, answering vaguely when he spoke to her; but never asking any question; or making any comment; or volunteering any speech whatever. This pained him more than all—for he knew that mind as well as body was sinking—lapsing away into a sort of dreamy, happy fatuity. And all attempts to rouse her from that state only threw her into fever, and often into delirium.

One day, with a view to interest without exciting her, he inquired—

"Dearest, is there any one you would like to see?"

"Yes—Ida," she said.

"And who is Ida, love?" asked Frank, very cautiously and gently, for he felt as if he were running the risk of hurting her again.

"Ida! La! don't you know? She was so good to me," she replied, with a pitying smile.

Captain Fairfax left the room, and at a venture went over to inquire at the cabinet-maker's. And he soon returned, accompained by Mrs. Knight. Zuleime received her visitor without any emotion whatever; smiling gently, and holding out her hand, and afterwards lying and silently and pleasantly watching her as she sat by the bed. And when she arose to take leave, she put up her lips for a kiss. Poor Ida pressed those lips very gently, and then quietly left the room: but as soon as she had passed the door, burst into tears.

Every day Zuleime's mind flowed away. Every day she became more infantile in weakness and simplicity. One day she made known a wish—the only one she had ever voluntarily expressed. It was affecting from its utter childishness.

"Dear Frank, you and your mother are rich. I want you to bring Ida and her child home to live here, so that she may not have to go on the stage any more." She reverted to this subject so frequently, repeating this, the only wish she had ever expressed, so often and earnestly, that her husband felt strongly inclined to gratify her desire, strange as it really was. He consulted his mother, and they concluded that it might be done, in a measure. Then they told her that it should be as she wished; that Ida and her child should come and live with them, if she would. Captain Fairfax went again to the cabinet-maker's, saw the poor actress, and told her that his wife needed a female companion to sit with her a portion of the day, and that she would hear of no one for the post but her old friend, Mrs. Knight, if Mrs. Knight would come and name her own salary. And when he had let slip that last word he turned away his face with his forehead burning under the

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astonished, indignant gaze of those proud, dark eyes of Ida's, as she said—

"Captain Fairfax, I receive a 'salary' in the regular line of my profession, when I am engaged in it; as Captain Fairfax also receives pay for his military services—but as he would spurn all offers of pecuniary remunerations for attentions to a wounded comrade, so should I decline all compensations for attentions to a sick neighbor; and I am most surprised that you should have made such a proposal to me."

So was Captain Fairfax himself really surprised that he should have been betrayed into such an error, as to forget that the very profession of the poor tragic actress really fostered a morbid pride. Her phrases might have been a little stilted after the manner of the stage, but the sentiments were really true and high, and worthy of all consideration. So Captain Fairfax apologized, as he best could, and arose to take his leave. Then she said—

"Do not quite misunderstand me. I am very anxious to do all in my power to serve Mrs. Fairfax, for I love her dearly! I am willing to devote all my time, night and day, to her service, for the affection I bear her. And I can do it now; for since the burning of the theatre I have been disengaged."

Captain Fairfax replied by expressing his grateful acknowledgments of her kindness, and begging her to come over frequently to see his wife. Then he took leave indeed and returned home, with the determination to ask his mother to go and invite Mrs. Knight to come and spend a few weeks with her friend at Fairview House. Old Mrs. Fairfax had quite a struggle with her Virginian pride and prejudices, before she could make up her mind to ask an actress to become her guest, but benevolence conquered, and as whatever she once resolved upon doing she did graciously and gracefully, she called upon Mrs. Knight, and gave her the invitation in a manner that insured its acceptance. Ida, with her little girl, came over the next day. And the old lady felt fully rewarded for her self-conquest, when she saw the smile of childish delight with which the gentle patient greeted her poor friend.

"See, Ida," murmured Zuleime, as her visitor seated herself at the bedside, "see, Ida, we are both now in the nice house we used to look at so longingly from our poor, back windows." She paused from weakness, and then said, "I used to call it my *Heaven*, you know! Ah, I did not know it was really *my* Heaven. I did not know Frank had ever lived here—how strange!" She paused again, but this time from thought, as well as from exhaustion, and then she took breath and said again, "I never could make it out clearly, and it makes my head ache to try. But see, dear Ida. Look at the crimson window-curtains—don't you know they are the very same crimson curtains that used to throw the warm, red glow across the snow, when we used to sit at the back window and watch them, and almost envy the people that lived here?"

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"Yes, I know, but do not talk too much, darling."

"I won't—but it is so strange. There, look through the windows, you can see our little, narrow, pinched, back windows, with their check curtains, as plainly from here, as we used to see these from there. We did not think we should ever get here to live, did we?—how strange!"

Her talk, rambling as it was, revealed one hopeful fact—that her mind was at length waking up. Frank saw it with joy. Day by day, from this time, her intellect seemed to clear and strengthen. Frank spoke of this to the doctor, who heard him with great gravity, and without comment.

As winter advanced towards spring, her mind "brightened more and more towards the perfect day." She had gleaned, partly from scraps of speech carelessly dropped, and partly by inquiry, the history of Frank's captivity among the Shoshonowas, that first originated the report of his death—and she was very gradually brought to understand the true position of affairs—so gradually through so many weeks, that the knowledge may be said rather to have slowly grown upon her. But as her mind cleared and strengthened, her heart became saddened and depressed. She understood too much now for her happiness. She no longer lay and watched her husband with a delighted smile as he sat beside her bed—no, but rather with a look of earnest, mournful love. Well she might. Frank was sad enough—he thought his heart was breaking.

One day, while lying propped up by pillows, she heard the name of Mrs. Georgia Clifton mentioned.

"Is she in the city?" inquired she.

"Yes, love," replied her husband.

"Send for her to come and see me—I *must* see her."

Captain Fairfax arose and left the room immediately, and instead of sending a servant, went himself to bring Mrs. Georgia. For so great was his desire to gratify promptly every wish of his loved one's heart, that he seldom trusted the execution of them to any but himself, lest they should fail or be delayed. It was well in this instance, at least, that he went in person. A servant could not have effected the purpose. The conscience-stricken Georgia would not have ventured to come. Even when unannounced, by reason of his haste, Captain Fairfax entered her parlor, the beauty turned deadly pale, under the fear of detected guilt. But when she saw his calm, kind manner, and heard him entreat, as a favor, that she would put on her bonnet immediately, and return with him to see his wife, who was extremely ill at Fairview, the sorceress was re-assured, and with her usual bewitching grace consented to accompany him.

When they arrived at Fairview House, and were shown up into the sick chamber, the patient smiled and held out her hands. Georgia hastened towards her, and seized both hands, covering them with kisses, and making a show of great emo-

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tion. Zuleime raised her feeble voice, and begged all to go out of the room, and leave her alone with her visitor. And when every one had departed, and the door was closed, she said—

"Sit down, please, here by my bedside." Mrs. Georgia took the nurse's arm-chair. "Dear Georgia," she said, gently taking both her hands, and looking kindly in her face, "I sent for you, because I thought you must be so unhappy about what you have unintentionally caused me to suffer. And I wished to tell you not to remember it in bitterness any more. Oh! I grieve so much at the memory of what I have made my dear father suffer, that I can feel for others who are tortured by remorse, and I would not, for the whole world, that any one should mourn for what they have caused me to suffer. So, dear Georgia, I acquit you of all blame, from the bottom of my heart, indeed I do—and I pray that God may make you happier than I have ever been. And I will never, never drop a hint, by which any one shall suspect—I mean I will never let fall a word to any one, that shall injure you, Georgia. I would not die and bequeath you so bitter a legacy as an enemy. Though I knew you would not come and ask me, I sent for you to assure you of this, Georgia, and to reconcile myself with you, that we might be friends before I die. And now, God bless you! Kiss me, and say good-bye, for my fever is rising."

And she held up her lips. Georgia was weeping.

"Zuleime, my dear child, why don't you call me mamma, as heretofore?" she asked.

"Oh, don't you know long ago you told me not to do it. But I will, if you wish it, now. Kiss me, dear mamma. There, now, go and be at peace."

Georgia hurried from the room. They never met again.

Zuleime revived slightly when the spring opened. She had heard that her sister Carolyn had nearly recovered her health, and was just about to set out on her voyage home. And two secret wishes the poor girl indulged: once more to visit White Cliffs, and to live to see her only sister again. But she kept them to herself in the fear of giving Frank trouble, for she knew that he would try to move heaven and earth to please her, and deeply grieve if he should fail. She concealed her wants, but they were discovered by him who watched day and night to anticipate her wishes. And Captain Fairfax called upon the family physician, and consulted him upon the possibility of taking Zuleime to White Cliffs, as soon as the spring weather should be permanently settled. The physician's opinion was highly favorable to his wishes. He said that she might be removed by easy stages to the country, and that if proper care and attention were bestowed, the journey and the change of air would probably be found very beneficial to her health. Captain Fairfax hastened home to cheer his wife with the news. And she was gladdened by it. She

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caught both his hands and kissed them, and held them to her face, and looking at him fondly, said—

"Dear Frank! dearest Frank! you try to perform miracles for me!"

The same night, Captain Fairfax wrote to Mrs. Clifton, of Hardbargain, to go over to White Cliffs and prepare to receive the invalid. And from that day Zuleime revived, and by the first of June was so much better, as to be able to be placed in the comfortable family carriage, in which, sometimes reclining upon downy cushions, sometimes resting upon the bosom of her husband, and supported by his arms, she travelled by easy stages to White Cliffs. They reached the end of their journey upon the afternoon of the third day. Mrs. Clifton and Catherine were there to receive them. Zuleime was lifted out of the carriage, very much exhausted. Yet, as she was gently carried through the yard, her eyes roved gladly over all the dear familiar scene—over mountains, fields and forests, clothed now in the luxuriant foliage of June—and all her countenance lighted up with joy, and she exclaimed many times in tones of profound gratitude—

"Thank God! oh, thank God!"

She was carried up stairs, and put to bed at once. And Catherine was stationed to watch her slumbers, while Mrs. Clifton remained below to attend to the comfort of the tired travellers. But Zuleime frequently awoke with a joyful start and recollection; and once she put her hand in that of Kate, and said—

"Dear Kate! blessed Kate! I am so glad to see you again! And so very glad to be *home* again! Sweet Sister of Mercy! will you stay and nurse *me* also? I think you could almost cure me! Sweet, unprofessed nun, will you stay and nurse me, too?"

"Yes, dear Zuleime, I will stay as long as you want me. But shut those tired eyes, love, and go to sleep."

"Yes, seal each eyelid down with a kiss, dear Kate, and then they will stay closed. And hold my hand as I go to sleep—I feel so safe when some one I love holds my hand while I slumber. I feel as if they could keep me in life while I slept, for you must know, dear Kate, that my heart has a morbid action, and some of these days I shall fall asleep lightly as now, but never awake again."

"Dear Zuleime, you must not indulge such fancies."

"They are not fancies, they are realities. I do not deceive myself and trifle with you, Kate. Do not you deceive me or trifle with me, either. There are secrets of life and death known only to the dying. Such secret is mine. I know that I shall lightly drop asleep some day, and never wake again—that is the reason I wish some one I love to kiss my eyelids down, and to hold my hand while I slumber." The words, the manner of the dying girl carried deep conviction to the heart of Catherine, and—

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"Oh! Zuleime," she said, "lean upon the failing arm of flesh if you will, but, oh, seek! seek the support of that Almighty arm that can sustain you in life and in death! Seek that!"

"I will—I wish to do it, or rather you, the handmaid of the Lord, shall bear me up in your faithful hands, and lay me within the Arm of Strength. I wished this long ago, but, oh, my dear husband and his good mother! they thought only of restoring me to health, and I could think of nothing but of trying to live for them, until very lately, when it was revealed to me that I should surely die. I have never yet told Frank anything about this. I feared it would distress him too much; but the lone knowledge troubled me. I needed to tell some one of it, some dear one with whom I could converse confidentially, and who should be wise enough to counsel me, patient enough to bear with me, courageous enough to face the result, and who, besides, would not be too greatly distressed, as my dear husband would. And so, sweet Kate, I have told you. Will you now stay with me and nurse me?"

"Yes, dear Zuleime, as long as you wish me to do so; but now, darling, if I am to be your nurse, you must mind what I have to say to you, and go to sleep." Catherine bent over her, and kissed her eyelids down upon the weary eyes, and held her hand until she fell asleep. At night, Captain Fairfax relieved her watch.

The next morning when Catherine entered the room she sat down by the side of the bed, and told her that she had good news to tell, that they had received a letter from Major Clifton, that Carolyn's health was improving, and that they had embarked, or had purposed to embark upon the first of May, and expected to reach home as soon as the middle of June. Zuleime clasped her hands in fervent thanksgiving while she listened, and when her friend ceased to speak, she exclaimed—

"In two week she will be here—oh! that I may live to see it!"

Kate bade her be of good cheer and hope; and when Catherine told any one to hope, her words and looks and manner all inspired the feeling. Zuleime was so recovered and enlivened as to be able to be lifted from her bed and placed in the easy-chair by the open window, that looked out upon the mountain scenery, all glorious in the light of summer morning. Old Mrs. Fairfax, and Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain, came in to pay her a visit, bringing her little girl with them. As for Captain Fairfax, he seldom left her side. All congratulated the invalid upon her improved health and spirits, and hoped and foretold great results from her residence in the country, and projected many pleasant drives, when she should be a little rested from the fatigue of her journey. Then they talked of Major Clifton and Carolyn's expected arrival, and

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laid out extensive plans of amusement to be put in execution when they should come, by which time Zuleime also would be considerably restored. Thus cheerfully, hopefully they talked. And the dying one listened sweetly; but when she found herself alone again with Kate she said—

"I let them talk, Catherine, for if they *really* have any hopes of my recovery, I do not wish to destroy those hopes by telling what I know, and if they only talk so to cheer me, why even then I do not like to make them sad by not seeming to believe them. And yet, and yet, perhaps I ought to tell Frank; perhaps I will!"

Catherine devoted herself to the service of the invalid, laboring zealously for her spiritual as for her bodily good. Indeed, the girl glided into the performance of such duties as naturally as if she felt herself especially called to the work, born for the work. The selfish wish for her own comfort and pleasure had never been very strong in the heart of Catherine; and within the last two years it seemed to have expired. She lived only for the good of others. She had grown to believe that there was no individual happiness for herself, except in the service of others. Young hope had died out in her heart, she was resigned. She adopted the submissive words of Mary and her Son, and said, within her heart, in deepest sincerity.

"Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." "Not my will, but Thine, oh God."

Zuleime was lifted from the bed to the easy-chair every morning, and calmly and profoundly the invalid enjoyed those glorious summer mornings. But she was failing very fast. She grew very anxious for the coming of her sister; but, unwilling to disturb any one by her anxiety, she confided it only to Kate. They had not heard from Major Clifton since the letter announcing his expected embarkation. They justly supposed him to be on his voyage home, accompanied by Carolyn, and were now daily looking for a letter announcing their landing, and their speedy arrival home. The middle of June passed, and no letter had come. The first of July arrived, but brought no news of the voyagers.

"Oh, if they had come when they promised, they might have seen me before I died—but I cannot hold out much longer, Kate. I feel as if the longing to meet Carolyn again had kept me up as by the excitement of expectation, but, Kate, I feel very weary, very much inclined to droop, yet know if I should give way I should drop into the arms of Death. I wish they would come. I want to see Carolyn. I want to see her happiness with my own eyes. And then it is not for myself—for if I die before she comes, Carolyn will take it very much to heart to know that her poor little sister had been found and had died—so inopportunely, just before she had got home. I wish they would come."

The second week in July arrived—with three days of cloud,

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and rain, and gloom. Zuleime could not leave her bed for her favorite seat at the window, but Catherine served her with more love and zeal than ever. The family had as yet received no news of the travellers, and though they daily grew more anxious, there was no foreboding in their anxiety. Sea-voyages at that day were of such uncertain length. All was no doubt well.

But on the evening of the second rainy day, while Captain Fairfax and Catherine sat with Zuleime, and all the other members of the family were assembled in the summer saloon, the door of the latter was quietly opened, and Major Clifton stood before the astonished circle. His mother advanced to meet and welcome him. Then she noticed—and they all noticed, that he was clothed in deep mourning. That told the tale! They welcomed him with affectionate sympathy, but no one asked a question. Nor did he as yet volunteer a word of his sorrow's history. It was only the next day that his mother learned from him how deceptive was the seeming convalescence of his wife—how from the day of their embarkation her strength declined—how for weeks their hearts fluctuated between hope and fear, as with the changes of her flattering disease she seemed better or worse—how when all thought of life was gone, but one earthly hope possessed her soul—to die *at home;*—of the waning of that last hope—of the death at sea—and, finally, of the lone grave in the ocean isle, where slept the mortal remains of the haughtiest beauty that ever trod the halls of a palace.

They would willingly have concealed the fact of her sister's decease from the dying girl—no one ventured to tell her of the event—they fondly believed that she remained in ignorance of it. But she knew it all from what she saw and heard. She knew that Major Clifton had returned alone, and she surmised the rest from the sad and tearful faces of all around her. Yes, she knew it all, as well as any could have made her know it, and in the tender thoughtfulness of her soul, she would not distress any by asking them questions relating to the last moment. But from this hour she sank rapidly. She could no longer be lifted from her bed without fainting. In deep trouble, Captain Fairfax summoned the old family physician. When he came, and saw the patient, his opinion was decidedly formed, and truthfully given—he said that the Richmond physician had evidently abandoned the case as hopeless, when he sent her home to die—that her life had probably been prolonged by her residence in the country—but that nothing could have saved her—and that she had now not many days to live. Captain Fairfax was almost mad with grief—and all the self-possession and self-control that he had learned in the long attendance upon her sick bed well nigh deserted him. It was many hours before he was sufficiently composed to take his usual place by her bedside, and then his agonized countenance betrayed the extent of his suf-

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fering. Catherine was sitting by her when he entered. Zuleime raised her dying eyes, and looking at him, tenderly beckoned him to approach. Then she motioned Catherine to leave her. When they were alone—she laid her hand within his own, and looking at him with unutterable love, said—

"Dear Frank—dearest Frank—I see that you know it all at last. Dearest Frank, I have known it a long time. Now let us talk freely and confidentially about it—let there be no more of that painful mist between us as when you thought only of my restoration to health, and I knew I was sinking fast into the grave." She paused a moment, and then said—"I want so much to comfort you. I have something to say to you."

His fingers closed upon her hand convulsively. He choked down his strong, rising emotion, and said—

"Do not try to talk, love, the effort will exhaust your strength."

"No—no, it will not. I am not so weak as I was when you came in. Dearest Frank, when you sit by me, and hold my hand, new life seems to run up my feeble veins, and I feel stronger. Let me talk, love. Ah! do not look so sad! It is better as it is, love. It is better I should go. I have spoiled my own life, and should spoil yours if I should live. Ah, it is a dreadful thing to occasion the death of any one! it is an awful thing to cause the death of a father. I caused the death of the most loving father that ever lived. And, dearest Frank! though in the struggle, in the bitterness of poverty, in the pangs of hunger and of cold, and in the pain and debility of illness, the feeling of compunction has been diverted, yet—had health returned with prosperity—remorse would then have darkened all my life; and in ruining my happiness, would have marred yours. Yes! I have spoiled my own life. It is well that I should not live to spoil yours, dearest Frank! I talk not of expiation *now*. Nothing that I could do or suffer, would alter the irrevocable past. We have all one Redeemer—Jesus Christ the Righteous. So I talk not of expiating the past; though perhaps if any heart is hardened against me, my early death may soften it. But let me speak of the future—*your* future, dearest Frank, and let me say it is better for all your coming years that I should die."

"Oh, do not say so, Zuleime—you break my heart."

"Dear Frank, you will grieve for me, I know you will, but be comforted. You are so young yet. This sorrow will pass like a morning cloud, and leave all your life a long bright day." She paused abruptly—a gray shadow swept darkly over her face and vanished. *He* did not see it, his face was buried in his hands. Then she asked to have her child brought to her. Frank went out, but soon returned to say that little Fan had been put to bed; and to ask her if the child should be waked up. "No, do not wake the poor, little thing," she

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said, then added, "I am very, very sleepy, Frank; dearest Frank, kiss my eyelids down to slumber like you always do, and hold my hand till I fall asleep. Kiss my lips, too, this time; kiss them last of all—there—good-night, love." Her voice sank away in a low, inaudible murmur, like a dying sound on the Æolian harp.

Her husband sat and held her hand, never moving, scarcely breathing, lest he should disturb her long, deep sleep. He sat there more than an hour. The room grew dark with the shades of evening; and when at length Catherine entered with the night lamp, he raised his hand with a sign of silence and caution, murmuring—

"She has fallen asleep." Catherine approached quietly, shading the lamp with her hand, and looked upon the sleeper. "Hush, be very cautious—do not disturb her," whispered Frank.

The sweet and solemn voice of Catherine gently arose, saying, "Come away, Captain Fairfax. Nothing will ever disturb her more. She has fallen asleep in Jesus."

CHAPTER XXVI.

GEORGIA.

The serpent now began to change;
Her elfin blood in madness ran.—KEATS.

Two months have passed since the death of the sisters. To the consternation of the *haut ton* of the city, the beautiful Mrs. Clifton has left Richmond, and come down to mourn with those that mourn at White Cliffs. With an air at once of earnest conviction and graceful weariness, she says that it is "All vanity and vexation of spirit," meaning fashionable society, spring travelling, and sight seeing; summers at watering-places among the mountains, or by the sea-side; winters in town, with plays, concerts, balls, dressing, visiting and waltzing; autumn parties in the country-houses, with equestrian expeditions, sailing excursions, and forest rides and drives, and even the moonlight serenades, and "the slight flirtation by the light of the chandelier." Mrs. Georgia speaks the truth. "Vanity" all this undoubtedly is in *her*. But *entre nous*, the "vexation of spirit" appertains to certain "small" accounts, ranging from fifty to fifteen hundred dollars, and sent in by landlords, merchants, jewellers, milliners, etc., people so wanting in delicate perception, as not to see that the honor of the belle's custom was quite payment enough in itself for their goods, and so utterly destitute of classic lore, and the faculty of distinguishing persons, as actually to draw out on a piece of paper a list of items opposite to a row of figures, with a sum total at the bottom, and send it to a Circe, as if she were a tradesman, and could understand it! Charming Georgia did not even try to comprehend such mysterious hieroglyphics. She knew, bewitching

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creature! that "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." Therefore, to escape duns, to recruit health and spirits, and, of all things, to console Major Clifton, she has come down to White Cliffs. The beautiful Georgia presented herself to the mourning master of White Cliffs in a very deprecating spirit—she said that she felt her arrival there at such a moment to be almost an intrusion, but that he would excuse it, as she had exhausted money and credit, and had no other home.

"You know," she added, as the tears suffused her large, dark eyes, "I am like the unjust steward of the parable, 'I cannot work—to beg I am ashamed.'"

"Except instead of being unjust, you suffer from the injustice of others," said Archer Clifton, very gently. He said that he considered the entail, which cut off the widow from any share in the landed estate of her deceased husband, very unjust and cruel. He knew that his uncle had deeply regretted it, and would have left all his personal property to her, had it not been swallowed up by debt. He said that he *himself* deplored the circumstance, and if it were legally in his power, he would divide the land with her, but that he only held it in entail, and as entire as it came to him it must be held for his heirs. He added, that he considered it his duty to compensate his uncle's widow for the injustice of the law to her, and that the case being so, she would find thirty thousand dollars placed to her account in the Bank of Richmond. Mrs. Georgia was overcome with emotion at this generosity on the part of Major Clifton. She put her handkerchief to her eyes, and arose hurriedly, with every mark of extreme agitation, exclaiming—

"No, no—this is too much! too good! only lend me the shelter of this roof—once my home—until I look about me and consider what to do."

He took her hand, with every demonstration of the tenderest affection and respect, and pressed it to his lips, and begged her to consider herself as heretofore, mistress of the establishment for as long as she wished—for her whole life if she pleased—and himself only as her sometime guest—adding, that it was impossible he should ever bring another lady there. She withdrew her handkerchief from her eyes, and glancing at him with a countenance eloquent with gratitude, respect, and affection, exclaimed—

"*I* take a large portion of your personal property, and *I* turn you from your home! Oh! no, no, no, thou thrice noble and generous man, no! Not one dollar of that money will I touch, so help me Heaven! And not one hour will I stay under this roof, if the master of the house is to be only my 'sometime guest!' No! I—I—I must go back to the city and give lessons in drawing and painting, as befits the artist's daughter."

"And as does *not* befit my uncle's widow, lady!" said Ar-

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cher Clifton, again taking her hand. "I have considered myself in some sort your guardian and protector—if you will admit the claim. Now, listen to me calmly, and act reasonably, for we of White Cliffs are not accustomed to be opposed by the ladies of our family. Hear me, then: This money, which I have placed to your account, is rightfully yours. I will explain. It was the fortune of my dearest Carolyn—" Georgia pressed his hand, and looked in his face with an expression of unspeakable sympathy—then he resumed, calmly, "Had she died unmarried, and during her father's lifetime, this money would have reverted to him, and he would doubtless have left it to you. I only give you that which, but for me, might have reached you more directly. And now let that subject rest for ever."

"Ah, but best and most generous of friends, I drive you from your home by staying here! I cannot stay! I must depart!"

"You must not, Mrs. Clifton—this is your proper home, as it is also mine. You do not drive me hence—why should you? Could I possibly remain, your company would be the dearest solace I could have. No! it is memory that drives me hence, sweet friend! I must—I *must* forget myself in distant lands! Forgive me for talking thus—to be quite plain, as soon as the intricate affairs of this estate are disentangled, and wound up, I design to set out for two or three years of travel; yet I shall not be able to get off for several weeks."

Here the conversation ended for the present. Thinking that for the first few days, at least, Mrs. Georgia would need a female companion, he got in his chaise, and went over to Hardbargain for Catherine.

"Kate is not here," said Mrs. Clifton, in answer to his inquiries—"do you not know that she has been for three weeks at her brother's cabin, nursing his wife through her confinement?"

Major Clifton threw his hat upon the table, and dropped himself into a chair, with an air of extreme vexation, saying—

"It really seems to me that that girl is nurse and servant-in-general to the neighborhood! Her brother might easily have found some old woman to nurse his wife. I wonder you permit her to be made such a slave of by everybody, mother."

"It does her no harm, Archer."

"Twelve months since you introduced Catherine into the best society in Richmond."

"The richest, you mean—not the best, by a great deal."

"And now you suffer her to throw herself into the most vulgar and common! Dear madam, is this right?"

"'What God hath cleansed, call not thou common, or unclean'—yes! it is right! Catherine, a girl of the very humblest birth, with natural talent and acquired accomplishments that fit her for any circle—should mix with all. And, Archer, what do you mean by 'vulgar?' If ignoble minds, corrupt hearts,

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and mean actions constitute vulgarity—then I for one have met more vulgar people in so-called high-life than ever I saw in low-life !"

"My dear mother, you are a Republican—let us waive this discussion, for I dislike to differ from you, and tell me where I shall find Catherine, for she positively must return with me to White Cliffs, to bear Mrs. Georgia company, until some other companion can be procured for her."

"Catherine is at her brother's cabin, as I told you."

"The same cabin he occupied before I left home?"

"Certainly."

Major Clifton entered the gig, and turned the horse's head towards the dell in which the overseer's cabin stood. When he drew up before the door, Carl came out to welcome him, and invite him to alight.

"No, thank you, send Catherine hither," he said—

Carl looked very much as though he did not intend to obey this haughty behest—but Catherine had already heard the demand, and appeared at the door.

"How-do-you-do, Kate? Mrs. Georgia Clifton is at my house, and I wish you to return with me to attend upon her. Come, get your bonnet, at once, Catherine, for I am rather hurried."

"We cannot spare Catherine, sir," said Carl, in a tone of displeasure.

"I did not address myself to you, my good fellow," said Major Clifton, looking over his head, and through the door of the cabin, watching Catherine, as she tied on her bonnet.

When Kate came out, he handed her into the gig, and nodding carelessly to the flushed, indignant Carl, drove off. When they had driven a little way—

"Catherine," he said, "is that man your full brother?"

"Yes, sir."

"The same father and mother?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph! You are not at all alike in feature. Are you very much attached to this brother, Catherine?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph." He did not speak again until they had reached White Cliffs, when he handed her out, and said—"Catherine, Mrs. Georgia is greatly fatigued; I wish you to attend to her comforts, this evening—do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," replied Kate.

The next day Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain, came over to call on Georgia. And afterwards, at the earnest solicitation of her son, she paid them a visit of a week. Major Clifton busied himself with the settlement of the estate. Although the great debts of the late Mr. Clifton could not be recovered of him, he determined to pay them all. A great many of them he discharged at once, by cash; and in payment of others, he gave notes, bearing interest. The calling in of these numer-

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ous debts, and the arrangement of the terms of payments, and other matters, occupied him nearly two months, so that it was the last of autumn before he was ready to set out on his journey.

He had taken leave of his mother the evening previous to the day upon which he was to leave home. The next morning, in parting from Mrs. Georgia and Catherine, he took leave of the lady, in a tender and respectful manner, raising her hand to his lips—but he drew Kate to his bosom, and pushing back the rippling waves of chestnut hair, that concealed or shaded two-thirds of her massive forehead, he said, gravely and sweetly—

"What are you going to do with all this brain while I am gone, Kate? How much longer will it lie fallow? Well? Never mind!" He kissed her freely and fondly as a near relative might, and bowing once more to Mrs. Georgia, hastened away. He paused upon the threshold of the door, however, seemed to hesitate, then suddenly came back, seized the hand of Kate, and drew her out upon the porch. "Catherine," he said, "do you remember a promise you made me once—not to marry without my consent?"

"Yes, sir, I remember it."

"I hold you to that promise, Kate. I must speak plainly to you at the risk of the certainty of wounding your feelings; yours is a singular position, Catherine—a girl of humble birth, quite penniless, yet with education and accomplishments that fit her to grace a higher circle. It is not likely, Catherine, that any gentleman in this part of the country will ever become a suitor for your hand, and no one who is not a gentleman should be permitted to do so!—Therefore, Catherine, I wish you to promise me not to listen to any proposals without my consent."

"I promised you long ago, sir. I will keep that promise until you release me from it!"

"That is a good girl! Now, then, once more good-bye," and again he folded her to his bosom, and then, indeed, he was gone.

Catherine turned with the intention of seeking her own room, but was instantly confronted by Mrs. Georgia Clifton, who stood before her with pallid cheek, set teeth, and gleaming eyes. She caught the wrist of the girl, and keeping a strong, vice-like grasp upon it, dragged her almost with violence into the parlor before the window, and casting herself into a chair, pulled Catherine up before her, and fixed those wild, dilated, star-like eyes upon her face. It fell blushing under the gaze.

"You love that man," she said, drawing her breath hardly, like one in passing pain.

The blush deepened upon Catherine's cheek, but she did not reply in words.

"Speak! Answer me! You love that man?" she repeat-

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ed, clutching the wrist of the girl so tightly as to cause her to wince.

"Madam, I am grateful to Major Clifton—he is my benefactor—he cares for me, and I am grateful to him."

"He is an arrogant man—he reminded you of your low birth."

"I know he did, madam, and perhaps I ought to have vindicated our common human nature, and told him, as I tell you now, that there is no such thing in God's universe as low birth, that every child comes into His world with equal claim upon His people; perhaps it was my duty to have told him this, only I am always a coward before Major Clifton, and never say the right thing at the right time to *him*, as I can to others."

"You love him! That is the reason! And you are a fool if you do not know it, or a hypocrite if, knowing it, you deny it. But he *despises* your love! He said to you, himself, that no *gentleman* would be likely to be a suitor for your hand!"

"I know he did, lady. His care for me makes him say rough, blunt things sometimes. I can bear them from him."

"You love him! Deny it, if you dare! But you are an idiot! an idiot! if you do not take *his hint* to conquer that passion! He said it was not likely that any gentleman would ever become a suitor for your hand! *he* is a gentleman—therefore he can never stoop to *you!* You do not answer me! Do you, perchance, deceive yourself with the idea that he ever will?"

"Lady—*no*, I do not deceive myself with the idea that he will ever 'stoop' to marry me. The woman that Major Clifton shall marry, if he ever marries, will be quite worthy of him, and that will preclude the idea of his 'stooping' to her."

"And that woman will not be *you*, presumptuous girl! Do you dare to hope it will? Speak! Answer me!"

"Lady!" said Catherine, in a tone of grave and dignified rebuke, "considering the recent bereavement of Major Clifton, the discussion into which you have drawn me is indelicate, to use no harsher term!"

"'Recent!' It is of five months' standing! You evade my question! You evade *all* my questions! I asked you if you loved him! Answer me!"

"Lady! long ago my heart became too unruly for my own management, and I gave it, with all its desires and affections, to God. I love nothing out of Him!"

"And do you expect Archer Clifton will ever marry you? Answer that!"

"Madam, I expect nothing."

"Do you hope it, then?"

"Lady, I hope nothing."

"You prevaricate, girl! Do you *wish* it then?"

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"Madam, I only wish that God may appoint all times, seasons and events in my life—making me humble, generous and grateful in prosperity, if it comes; and strong, courageous and patient in adversity, if, as is most likely, *that* comes!"

"Humph—would it make you happy to be the wife of Archer Clifton?"

"Mrs. Clifton, you have no right to ask me that question!"

"Yet I *do* ask you, and I insist upon a reply!"

"And I decline giving it."

"I am answered! You love Archer Clifton! You feed your heart upon the secret hope of one day being his wife! And now listen to me, girl!" she exclaimed, every vestige of prudence and self-restraint swept away by her rising passion, "*I, too*, day and night, feed my soul upon one desperate hope—that I live for, would die for, or go to perdition for! *I, too*, love Clifton. I loved him the first hour I ever saw him. I have loved him ever since, only more madly for every obstacle, danger, *duty* that stood between, dividing us! I have schemed, dared, *sinned* for him! Twice he has been snatched from me by fate, twice restored to my hopes! Oh! I know my own strong will had much to do with that restoration! He is given to my hopes again! Think you, *now*, that you can win him from me? *No*, idiot! If there be any power in my own soul, on earth, in Heaven, or in hell to help me, I will find it out, and enlist it to give me this one desire of my heart, this man's love! Since first I ever beheld his face, I have dreamed, hoped, toiled, *lived* for nothing else! I have suffered for him! Oh! angels and devils! how I have suffered for him! In the days when he came wooing Carolyn, wooing her before the face of *me*, bound with indissoluble chains!—me, loving him as *she* had no power or conception of loving anything! Many times I was almost mad with despair!—knowing, too, if he would only love me I should be nearly mad with joy! I have sacrificed great prospects for him. Yes! little as you think me capable of it! This summer I might have made a splendid alliance in Richmond—a travelling nobleman—an English nobleman, girl! a baron with an annual rental of thirty thousand pounds sterling—with seats in the three kingdoms, and a palace in Portman Square. I rejected him, when I knew that Clifton was free! In the faint hope of winning Clifton, I would not bind myself. All that I have ever done of good or of evil has had him for its end and object! I was the belle, queen, *idol* of Richmond! If I schemed and toiled for a position, and gloried in my success, it was that *he* might hear of it, and his pride might be enlisted for me! You saw me one winter at the governor's reception! You saw how I was worshipped there! But *he* was present—and free, and I did not care what the thousands thought of me, I only cared what that unit might think!" Her voice sank into tenderness, and she paused, and dropped her brow into both open hands. But

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soon raising her head again, she said, "Look at me well! Ay, look! What sort of a rival do you take me to be? If you cannot guess, I will tell you! I am not superstitious or scrupulous, as you are! I am one, who, for my soul's great passion, will do, or dare, or suffer anything! I ask no leave of earth or Heaven for what I do! I do what I will, or *can*, and take the consequences; earth or Heaven can but punish, and I can risk or bear it!—for there is no pain or loss in the universe that I weigh with the loss of my love! And not for the fear of eternal perdition—not for the hope of everlasting salvation, will I forego the joy of my mortal love! Now, hear me, girl!" She rose upon her feet, bending over Catherine, with her hand clutched upon the maiden's shoulder with a vice-like grip, and, gazing into her eyes with contracted, gleaming pupils, she said,—while her voice dropped into the low, deep, stern tone of intense and concentrated passion, in which every word, syllable, letter was articulated with a distinct, metallic ring:—"Now, hear me! If you dare to come between me and my love—by the living Lord that sent my burning soul upon this dull earth, and who can hurl it hence to a burning perdition—I will find a way to kill you! Do you hear me?"

Catherine grew pale beneath the tiger eye and clutch of the fearful woman, but she answered—

"Madam, I have heard you utter wild and wicked words. I will endeavor to forget them."

"Remember them! You are warned!"

And releasing her hold, the dark lady passed from the room.

Catherine remained sitting where she had left her, appalled by the exhibition of demoniac passion she had witnessed. One pain and one fear possessed her above all others—deep regret that this most wicked woman had evidently already attained such an ascendancy over the mind of Clifton, and dread lest, in despite of all the sin, she would gain her object—his hand! But Catherine carried all her doubts and fears to her Heavenly Father. And soon to her clear, strong mind it became evident, that however wicked and unscrupulous, potent and dangerous the Circe might be on ordinary occasions, she possessed too little self-government, was under the influence of too strong and impetuous passions, to succeed in maintaining any long course of duplicity, such as would be necessary to the accomplishment of her purpose. And Kate became calm. She wished to leave the house. She could ill bear to live under the same roof with this woman, and meet her at least three times a day, at meals, if no oftener. But she had promised Major Clifton to remain with Mrs. Georgia until she should have other company, and she must keep her promise. It was, besides, doubly sacred, being made to him, and the pain it brought her was endurable—borne for him.

Mrs. Georgia sought the garden, the open air, anywhere

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where she could breathe freely. When the storm in her bosom had subsided, and reason was again in the ascendant, she could have torn her hair and beat her breast, yea, and rent her garments with excess of chagrin, to think that she had so betrayed herself to Catherine. She did not fully believe that Catherine would repeat this scene where it could injure her, or anywhere, in fact. Still, she thought it safer to guard against such a contingency, and while *she herself* still possessed the unshaken confidence and respect of Major Clifton, to impugn the conduct and character of Catherine, and thus forestall and invalidate any testimony she might hereafter give. She felt that she must proceed very cautiously. A plan of correspondence had been arranged with Major Clifton, previous to his departure. She soon began to receive long letters from him, filled with interesting descriptions of the countries through which he passed, the people whom he met, and philosophical comments upon both. And to these she replied in other letters, full of appreciation, admiration, gratitude, and breathing, besides, the highest, purest, most disinterested sentiments and opinions upon all the subjects of their correspondence. Into these letters, she gradually introduced the name of Catherine—carelessly, at first, as if she thought little about her, one way or the other,—as thus: "Catherine is with me still—she desires to be remembered;" then, in a second letter, by a slight line of praise, as though the girl was rather winning upon her, as—"Catherine is well. By the way, what a remarkably clever girl she is;" then, in another, with warmer panegyric, as though she really very much improved upon longer acquaintance, thus: "How can I ever thank you sufficiently for placing Catherine with me?" Next came high encomiums upon Catherine's talents, in this wise: "Catherine has left me, and is with your mother, as no doubt the latter has written you. Apropos! What a mind that girl has! Did you ever observe?" And then, in a subsequent epistle, came an expression of wonder at the "diplomatic" character of Kate's intellect, and an opinion that the writer really believed her thrown away in private life. And next, a cooler mention of the maiden, with the hint of a fear that she was gaining the mastery over Mrs. Clifton's strong mind. Finally, after some months, she wrote thus, as if speaking frankly from a sense of duty, and at the cost of great pain: "I fear that I have been greatly deceived in my estimate of Catherine's good principles. How shall I introduce what I am about to say to you? But you had best come home and see for yourself. For I know that your mother is in the power of as dangerous an intriguante as I ever heard of; and mind—she will influence Mrs. Clifton to disinherit her own son, and bequeath *her* the farm at Hardbargain. That 'Maria Teresa' brow of hers meant something, after all. But you do not know with what pain I write this, Archer! I cannot pursue the subject—only regard for you, and fidelity to your interests, would have drawn

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me to its discussion. I advise you come home and look after your own welfare!"

What influence this had upon Major Clifton, will be seen in the sequel.

And while Georgia was exercising her power abroad, she was busy at home also. Having heard or guessed at Colonel Conyer's "foolish" attachment to Catherine, she wrote and invited him to make up a party of his own friends, and come down and spend Christmas with her. And the gallant officer, delighted with this quintessence and perfection of confidence and hospitality—this *carte blanche* to be filled up at his own pleasure, wrote and most gratefully accepted the invitation for himself and "friends."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CATHERINE.

Now has descended a serener hour.—KEATS.

COLONEL CONYERS exercised tact and discretion in availing himself of the privilege granted him by Georgia. In consideration of the recent affliction of the family, he made up a very quiet and appropriate party—namely, the lady's father, the artist, a pale young clergyman who was suffering for country air, and the wife and sister of the latter.

After his arrival at White Cliffs, Mrs. Georgia gave him every opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with Catherine, and every encouragement to persist in his suit. Girls, she said, were often whimsical, and Catherine was especially shy, but disposed to think highly of her suitor, and well worth the trouble of perseverance. Colonel Conyers thereupon grew importunate, and Catherine became distressed at his persistence, and announced her intention of returning to Hardbargain. When her lover heard this, his grief seemed unbounded—he had so long counted on success, so long been deceived by Mrs. Georgia's assurances, and by Catherine's gentleness of denial, that now when his hopes were quite overthrown, he became passionate and vehement in his demonstrations of sorrow. His trouble affected Catherine very deeply. She went and sat down by him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder, and said, in her gentle sympathetic tones—

"Do not grieve so; indeed I am not worth so much love, or so much regret—indeed I am not—I am a poor girl, very ignorant of society, very full of weakness and error."

"Oh, Catherine! Catherine! that is nothing to the purpose! You are what you are, and I adore you! Do not make me wretched!"

"Heaven knows I do not wish to! I am your friend—*indeed* I am. I would do anything in the world to give you peace, indeed I would—except—"

"Except love me, proud girl!"

"'Proud?' No. I am not proud. Why should I be? Do

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not mock me! Indeed I feel that you have conferred the greatest honor upon me in your preference. An offer of his hand is the highest mark of respect and confidence a man can give a woman; the world would think it higher still, coming from one of your rank to one of mine. I myself should in any case be proud of your regard, only—"

"Well? 'Only?'"

"Only I feel so grieved to see you look so sorrowfully; but—"

"Well, my dear girl, well! but what?"

She paused, a slight blush suffused her cheek—she gathered courage and went on to say—

"I do not know why I should not speak anything that may be upon my heart, at whatever cost to my natural feelings, if the hearing of it will do good to any human being. Yes! I will speak, for your sake. I do not fear to speak, for I have perfect confidence in you. Listen then, Colonel Conyers, dear friend. You are not the only one who has missed earthly happiness. I think it must be written in the book of fate, that we may not have those whom we love too deeply—in other words, that we may not have idols. It seems to me, that notwithstanding all other troubles, it would make us too happy, in an existence designed chiefly for trial and probation."

"That is a sad, strange, despairing sentiment, for one so young!"

"No, not despairing—for if we may not have joy, there remain the peace and cheerfulness found in duty. And if we may not have the love of the heart's idol, there remain the affection of relatives, the esteem of friends, the love of God, and the hope of Heaven."

"Catherine, you have loved. Tell me about it, my child."

"I intended to tell you about it. It is the best proof of entire confidence and esteem that I can give you. It will show you how highly I value you, and it will assure you also, of the utter impossibility of getting a heart that is not mine to give—if it were worth giving."

She paused in great embarrassment, her cheeks were suffused with blushes, yet she seemed resolved to proceed. As if to assist her, he said—

"This being whom you deify with your love, my child! what a splendid, what a magnificent nature he must have! what transcendant personal attractions! what an intellect! what a heart! Is it not so? tell me!"

"Ah! no; you are mistaken; these things excite admiration and wonder, they do not of themselves win affection. Oh, no! he of whom you speak, is not so handsome as you are; he has no more mind than you have, and not so much heart—even I admit that."

"And yet you love him, and can love him."

"Even so—do you wonder at it? Have not you passed

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by women—handsome, graceful, accomplished—to fix upon a plain country girl like me?"

"Oh, but not women with your candor, purity and strength of mind. Oh, Kate! what depths of truth and innocence you have revealed in the very confession you have made me! Who else but yourself dared make such a revelation?"

Catherine looked up at the speaker in doubt.

"Go on, dear girl. Tell me that this man adores you, and I will never, while I live, trouble you with myself again."

"Ah, no! it was nothing like that which I set out to tell you. Ah, no! I only wished to let you know—that your case of disappointed affection is not solitary—that I too have missed life's crowning joy—the love of one I love. He does not even notice me now. I never permit myself to dream that he will ever love me. Yet I would like to live with him, to serve him—myself unknown, unnoticed, if I might only be near him. I envy the waiting-maids and men, and even the dogs, who are full-feasted every day, with the presence for which my heart starves. I would like to give my life to his service, but I am unnecessary to his smallest need. Well! I cannot do him any good; but I serve one who is dear to him, and so I stay the hunger of my heart. Please do not think ill of me for telling you all this. It would grieve me to have you think any evil of me. I esteem you, and want your esteem. I have done some violence to my instincts in telling you this. Do not think ill of me for doing so. I only do it that you may know you are not the only one in this world who is————*not happy.*"

"Think ill of you, Catherine! Do anything but adore you—and mourn your loss for ever—if lose you I must—oh, Heaven!"

"This life is a tragedy—for always that which is dearest, is lost in it, and it ends in death. The closing scene is the corpse, the shroud, the coffin—and the curtain drops upon the grave—all beyond is hidden—except to the eye of faith. My experience of life has been all darkness, clouds and storm—and the transient gleams of gladness or of hope have been—not like the sunshine, but like the lightning. Yet through all the grief, and gloom, and the tempting doubt, the 'still, small voice' of God's spirit has spoken to my soul, and comforted me."

"Oh, Catherine, my child! that I could make your life all sunshine—that you would let me try—I do believe I could make you happy."

Catherine shook her head, slowly, with a sad smile, saying—

"We all believe that! We all think that in *us only* is vested the power of making those we love happy. It is because we know that we are willing, anxious to do more for them than any other person would! It is a fond error. Our efforts—our greatest sacrifices are often needless, as we ourselves are nothing to our gods of flesh."

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'Am I nothing—nothing to you, then?"

"You are my dear and honored friend."

"Oh, Catherine, I could make your life happy! Nay, but do not look incredulous—I know I *could* My love is not selfish, like that of most other men. It is perfectly disinterested. It only asks to serve you. It only desires to see you at ease. Dear Kate, you have told me all on your heart—you might lay that heart, with all its burden of unrequited affection, upon my bosom, and I would comfort, and cherish, and sustain it, until I should win its love all to myself."

Again, and more mournfully, the girl shook her head.

"Do not pursue this subject, Colonel Conyers. Dear friend, by dwelling upon our wild wishes, they grow to seem hopes, and probabilities, and certainties. In my youth—"

"In 'your youth!' How many years ago was that, Catherine?"

"Strange!—but at eighteen, I really feel no longer young."

"Yet it is not winter, but a wintry spring, that chills your young life. That is not uncommon. Spring—the spring of hope, the spring of joy, the spring of life will open indeed by-and-by, and be all the warmer and brighter for its lateness—and my Catherine shall feel younger—but for increased wisdom—at twenty-five, than she does now at eighteen—that lot is for her—whosesoever treasure she may be. But what was she going to say happened in her long passed youth?"

Catherine smiled, and said—

"Well, then—when life was newer and fresher, believing—as I do now—all the promises of the Bible—and saying—as I do now—that the days of miracles are not passed, and never will be so, until the days of God's omnipotence and man's faith is passed, I used to say that I would pray for what I wanted, though the granting of my prayer should seem to involve an impossibility. But now, later in life, I have learned a better lesson still, from the example of my Master. He might have saved himself by a miracle, but He chose rather to endure the cross and the shame, for the working out of His Father's will and purpose. God has a purpose and a will in every—the humblest life. And now, for all other vain and childish petitions, I substitute the words of the Saviour—'Not my will—but Thine, be done.'"

"Catherine, you must be happy, even in this world. You are so good. You must be made happy in the end."

"Ah, I should be sorry to set up the plea of goodness—when I see so many people so much better than I am suffer so deeply. It is too often represented that goodness is rewarded in this world—but oh! how can any one remember the life and death of a thousand martyrs, and the crucifixion of the Savour, and not feel that it is not so—and not feel that the reverse is often so!"

"Oh, Catherine, that is a very gloomy doctrine, and I will not believe it! There is a hopeful text of Scripture that

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comes into my mind—'Godliness is profitable in all things, having the promise of the life that *now is*, and that which is to come.' It is the clouds of your wintry spring that make everything look so gloomy to you!"

"It is not a gloomy doctrine! Oh, no! not gloomy, by all the hope and illumining of the glorious Resurrection and Ascension."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WINTER EVENINGS AT THE FARM.

Oh, winter, ruler of the inverted year,
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seemest,
And dreaded as thou art.
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fire-side enjoyments, homestead happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturbed retirement, and the hours
Of long, uninterrupted evening, know.—COWPER.

CATHERINE returned to Hardbargain on Christmas Eve. It was a clear, cold, crisp afternoon, and the level sun threw a glistening, yellow lustre, like powdered gold-dust, over the crusted surface of the snow-clad earth. And as Kate's little, rough-coated pony stepped freely out over the ground, life and hope and joy tided back to her heart, giving bloom to her cheeks, light to her eyes, and elasticity to all her motions. She was very glad indeed to find herself on her way to the farm, and about to exchange the feverish, exciting atmosphere of White Cliffs, and the disturbing proximity of Georgia, for the long, calm days, and long, calm evenings with Mrs. Clifton, at the farm-house. She reached her destination at dusk. Mrs. Clifton met the girl with a smile of pleasure, and welcomed her with a kiss of affection. Then she conducted her into the parlor, where she made her sit down by the fire, while she removed her bonnet and shawl. Next she summoned Henny, and gave orders that tea should be served immediately, and a fire kindled in Miss Catherine's room, as the young lady was fatigued, and would wish to retire early. There was in the manner of the lady upon this evening, and from this evening, a maternal tenderness and solicitude, very soothing and delightful to Catherine. This was so apparent to the domestics, that they began to deport themselves towards the maiden with the deference due to the daughter of the house.

And how calmly and cheerfully the winter days passed. There was the early rising, and the early breakfast, in the warm, bright, back parlor, where the morning sun shone in. There was the leisurely talk over the meal, about the occupations, which were also the amusements of the day. After breakfast, came the ride around the farm, in the course of which every field and barn and granary was inspected, and every negro quarter visited. And during these rides, Mrs.

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Clifton gave Catherine much information relating to agricultural matters.

"For, my dear," she said, "some day you may be a planter's wife, and have all these things to look after, while your husband is in the public service, absent with his regiment, or at the legislature." To which Catherine ventured no reply. And then came dinner, and the short afternoon nap, and tea, and the long, serene evening by the fireside employment in needle-work, enlivened by rational, cheerful conversation, and occasionally varied by music or reading, and finally, ended by family prayer and bed.

Mrs. Clifton and Catherine never, never wearied of each other. They had many occupations for hands and heads —they were both strong, original thinkers, and above all were deeply interested in the same being—the absentee.

And now Catherine enjoyed a very dear, but dangerous delight, in the perusal of Major Clifton's letters of travel. These letters arrived about two in a month. And, ah! the evening, when they came, were festivals indeed to the recluse lady and the maiden. Often when one was brought in, Mrs. Clifton reclining, through weakness, upon the sofa, shading her eyes with her hand, would say, "Break the seal and read it to me, dear Catherine." And Kate would do so—drawing delicious draughts of perilous pleasure from the poetic and artistic spirit that pervaded every sentiment, narrative and description in the epistle. And on these long, quiet winter evenings, very often the conversation turned upon the absent son—the dear topic always introduced by his mother. It seemed as if Mrs. Clifton wished to make Catherine thoroughly acquainted with his character and disposition—with his faults and weaknesses, as well as with his virtues and powers.

"My son has his serious imperfections, like other men, of course—though your eyes contradict me, Catherine; if I, his partial mother, see them, they exist, you may depend Archer is no demigod, my dear, in the estimation of any one but—well, no matter—don't blush so—I am his mother, and I love him, too, and think highly of him, of course, but I acknowledge he is no angel, Kate, and I should be sorry if you should take him for one—disappointment would come of it, my dear. He is proud, jealous, and suspicious as a Spaniard, and while under the influence of these feelings, he is reserved and sullen as an Indian—yet these faults of character have actually seemed virtues—the pride jealousy and suspicion have seemed high sense of honor and intellectual acumen—and the reserve and sullenness—dignity! Is it not so, my dear?"

Kate's eyes lighted, and her cheeks flushed highly, but not with bashfulness—with an emotion that was swelling at her heart—and carried away from self-consciousness by enthusiasm, she answered—

"Oh, madam! I know what I would say to you, if I only

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knew how to say it. Heaven sends divine thoughts and feelings into my heart and brain sometimes, but they cannot pass thence into words—they are choked up perhaps by sin or imperfection. Such a feeling I have now—heavenly light, if I could only refract it—" She paused an instant, unconscious that the lady was looking intently upon her. Then she spoke again, slowly, in a kind of calm fervor—" Real affection—I do not mean passion or imagination—but real love does *never* invest its object with *un*real virtues!—never!—all faults are the excess or the deficiency of some virtue—well, real love sees its object not perhaps as he is at his worst—not even perhaps so evil as he is even at his best, but as he may become!—as he surely *will* become, if that real affection continues faithful to its trust. Ah! how strong that conviction is in my heart—how weak upon my lips!"

" I understand you, Catherine, and may your true affection be the divine alchemy that shall transmute all Archer Clifton's faults into virtues." At this personal reply, Catherine's eyes fell and her cheeks burned with sudden self-recollection, and for weeks after this she could not recall the conversation without deep blushes.

More and more freely as the weeks passed by did Mrs. Clifton talk to Kate of her son and his peculiarities, and the best way to meet them.

" You know, my dear Catherine, the apostle, in order to win proselytes, made himself all things to all men. Archer is proud, and my dear girl must raise herself a little out of that humility of manner which is very distasteful to the haughty, except when exhibited towards themselves, when it naturally becomes very acceptable." This style of conversation, addressed to her for weeks and months, was at once very pleasing and very painful to Kate. It was sweet, it was dear beyond measure, to be considered in this near relation to her beloved, to be addressed daily and hourly as if she possessed the power of rendering his future life better and happier, and so addressed by his own mother, too, but it was also humiliating to be supposed to presume on the future esteem and affection of one who had never addressed the language of love to her. Often she thought of begging Mrs. Clifton to desist from this style of conversation, but a certain bashfulness, a deep respect for the lady, a distrust of herself and of her own experience, and the childish thought that Major Clifton might have entrusted to his mother an intention that he never confided to herself its object, and the delight of living in this blessed illusion, and the fear of breaking the charm, kept her silent for a long time, during which Mrs. Clifton gradually fell into the manner of considering her and speaking to her as her son's future wife. All at once one day it suddenly struck Kate that Mrs. Clifton might be the victim of a mistake, and under the impression that some understanding or engagement existed between herself and Major Clifton, and that her own silence and

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seeming acquiescence had served to confirm this error. And this very natural and rational thought fell upon the girl like a thunderbolt, utterly blasting and destroying all her beautiful hopes, and covering her face with the blushes of deep humiliation. She felt that she must undeceive Mrs. Clifton immediately. So when they sat together at the work-table, before the evening fire, and the lady spoke of her son, saying, among other things—

"The most unhappy trait in his character is his tendency to suspicion, my love. Be straight-forward with him, Catherine, never have a secret from him, not even one touching a little pleasant surprise, be perfectly frank and open-hearted with him, and, alas! even that course may not always save you from suffering by his besetting sin, and when it does not, Catherine, there is nothing left for you but patience and trust. You see, on Archer's behalf, I expect a great deal of you, my love, like all mothers-in-law, I suppose."

Catherine's face was bent over her work; ashamed of her supposed mistake, ashamed of the weakness that now choked her voice, she remained silent for some time. At length, gathering a false impression from her long continued silence, Mrs. Clifton said—

"Do I hope too much from you, Kate, my love?"

With an effort, Catherine controlled her emotion, looked up and replied, steadily—

"No, no, dear Mrs. Clifton, you do not demand too much of me. As far as my will and my power, as far as the grace of God aids me, I will serve Major Clifton with the affection and fidelity of a sister and a servant, but I have not the smallest reason to suppose that he will ever admit me to affect his character and conduct in any way, even if I should presume to wish it."

"My dear Kate, Archer's wife will be his friend, companion and counsellor—he never would be happy with a mere housekeeper or parlor ornament, however beautifully accomplished and amiable—it is therefore he will prize my dear Catherine's clear, strong mind and proud heart—she will be admitted to his closest thoughts and his noblest counsels, do not doubt it."

"Oh, madam, you do not comprehend me yet, I see. How deeply rooted your mistake must be, dear lady! Oh, how shall I tell you? Indeed you are in error if you suppose—if you suppose that—" Kate stopped short and burst into tears.

Mrs. Clifton encircled her waist with her arm, and said—

"Come, Kate, stop all this blushing and weeping. Let us be confidential, you and I, as mother and daughter should be, for you are as my own daughter, Kate, and am I not a mother to you?"

"Oh, yes! yes! dear lady!" said Catherine, taking her hand, and pressing it to her bosom, and covering it with

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kisses. "Oh, yes, you are indeed like a mother to me, if I were only worthy to be your daughter! and I love and honor you more than ever a mother was loved and honored in this world before, I do believe!"

"Then let there be no reserve between us, dear Kate. Let us be open with each other, as parent and child, whose loves, and hopes, and wishes are the same. I have been plain with you all along, only gradually unfolding your future, not to alarm your shyness—and to win your confidence. I have longed for this confidence—this perfect openness between us—that we might talk with more intelligence, and with more comfort—and I have courted it by my own frankness; but in return for all my candor, Catherine has shown me only reserve and blushes. Will she be more confiding now?"

"Alas, dearest lady, what can I say to you, but that you are greatly mistaken—sadly mistaken—oh, yes, indeed, sadly mistaken," replied Kate, almost weeping again.

"I am not mistaken in supposing that Catherine loves my son. I am not mistaken in knowing that the fact gives me more happiness than anything else in the world. Yet I would like to hear Kate admit it."

"Well, dearest lady—yes!—down, pride!—if it will give you any pleasure to hear it, I must not withhold the confession—yes, I *do* love your son—so much—so much—that it will make me an old maid!"

Mrs. Clifton laughed, a little, low, jolly laugh. (The lady very seldom laughed, and when she did, it had a strange, exceedingly pleasant effect upon the hearer—it was a very agreeable surprise, revealing, as it were under that grave, stern surface, traces of a mine of wit, humor, fun and mischief, that must have existed, and frequently sparkled forth, ere the sorrow and the seriousness of life smothered and extinguished it). She laughed her little, low, jolly laugh, and replied—

"That were a strange effect of love, Catherine; but trust me, it will not be so with Archer's consent."

"Dear Mrs. Clifton, forgive me for saying again, that you are very much mistaken—never, never in his life, has Major Clifton bestowed upon me one word, or look, that might be misconstrued by the vainest woman into a preference!"

"Well, Kate! I know that! I know that he has never addressed you on the subject. But I know that he will do so. For he loves you, Catherine, and has loved you from the first hour he ever saw you—even from the—the night he sat and studied you in your brother's cabin. And it is just as certain that you will be his wife, as that you both will live to marry. So, dearest, let there be no more reserve between us—consider this marriage sure, as it really is—(so far as any future event is sure)—and let me talk freely, for my time and opportunity is short."

Catherine raised her eyes to the sallow—almost cadaverous

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face of the lady, and a conviction of the truth and reality of what she predicted, forced itself upon her, with a sharp pang.

"Now, dear Catherine, I did not ask you for that troubled look! Will your heart ache because a dry leaf drops in the autumn, rather than hangs shivering on the tree through half the winter? But, dear child, I allude to this coming event, not to cast its 'shadow' over you, but to explain why I wish now to use these days in making you as conversant with the idiosyncracies of your future companion, as only years of married life could do, and to prevent years, perhaps, of misunderstanding and sorrow. There is something dreadful in the discovery of unsuspected faults, *after* marriage—and something very, very mournful in the disappointment of the trusting affection, and in the saddened efforts of the heart to adjust itself to the circumstances—efforts that in one case out of ten, perhaps, succeed. But if the worst is known before marriage, the man or the woman may consider well whether they have the strength of heart to conquer their own faults, and bear with those of their companion. That you would do all this for your husband, Kate, I am convinced. I only talk now to smooth your path of duty." The lady here released Catherine from the embrace in which she had held her through this conversation, and desired her to ring for the servants to come in to prayers.

Catherine, as had been her custom for several weeks past—upon account of Mrs. Clifton's weakness—conducted the evening devotions.

When prayers were over, and the servants dismissed, Catherine attended Mrs. Clifton to her chamber, and assisted her with affectionate care until she had retired to bed. Then, after receiving the lady's parting kiss, she hastened into her own chamber, threw herself upon the bed, and gave way to a long-pent burst of sorrow. Within the last three years Catherine had seen much sickness, death, and bereavement—one after another of her associates or relations had faded and fallen, and she had mourned their loss; and her life had taken a sombre hue, and sunken into a depressed tone. But that this beloved friend, this kind benefactress, this dear, dear companion—this more than mother, sister, *all* to her heart—should pass away from the earth and be seen no more. Oh! it brought a sense of desolation that threw a shadow and a chill over all the future—over even the bright hopes shining in the distance. And then the identity of the love she bore mother and son together forced itself upon her heart. And she felt that a union with the son could not give her perfect content, unless the mother were there to share her love and service, and to participate in their happiness. Without that mother's presence, their plan of life would be unfinished—their circle of love incomplete. And oh! came the sharp, agonizing question, how could she ever bear to lose the light, and warmth, and strength, imparted daily, hourly, from that dear face—that face which had

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never looked on her but in affection—that face, the very image of Clifton's own, except that it was sweeter, holier, and never, never harsh—how could she ever bear to lose her sweet resting place on that more than maternal bosom—that bosom on which she could ever lay her aching head, or aching heart, in perfect peace and confidence, sure of being understood, sure of being sympathized with? Oh! life would be darkened indeed when she should pass away. The sense of sorrow was so sharp, so agonizing, that the girl could have thrown herself upon the floor—could have wrestled with Heaven, in wild prayer, that this life might be saved, and this sharp anguish spared her. But Catherine was habitually self-restrained, and she bore this mental anguish as she would have endured severe physical pain—in silence, in patience, until her soul was subdued to the meekness of resignation. And then prayer brought comfort.

And she met the lady in the morning with a cheerful countenance. And they spent the day as usual.

So passed the winter and the spring. Though Mrs. Clifton failed visibly from day to day, she still continued her rides around the farm, and her general supervision of the household and of agricultural affairs, and her instructions to Catherine. Her people, who well knew the nearly hopeless state of her health, foretold that their mistress would keep up and out to the very last—and finally die in her chair. Indeed, while flesh and blood wasted away, her nervous energy seemed unimpaired, and her cheerfulness was undiminished. She talked of her approaching departure as calmly and pleasantly as she would have talked of going to Richmond. Never obtruding the subject, however, unless necessity demanded its introduction.

The serenity and cheerfulness of the lady affected Catherine very beneficially—"familiarizing" to her feelings the future, immortal life. Catherine endeavored to persuade her to have a physician.

"Why, so I would, Kate, if I had any specific disease; but when all the frame is wearing out together very slowly and quietly, why call in a doctor to disturb the harmony of natural decay, and painfully build up one portion of the sinking frame at the expense of another? Why not fade and fall easily, as all else in benign nature does?"

Catherine next suggested writing for Major Clifton to hasten home.

"Why, my child? Why, because I am going the common road, should others be hurried and worried? Everything in blessed nature and Divine Revelation teaches us a sweeter lesson. No—Archer set out for a twelve months' tour; let him complete it. He will return this autumn. Quite time enough, Catherine. I shall live till then, and longer. I can calculate the progress of my body's failing, and the duration of my life, with almost mathematical precision. I shall live to meet Archer, and to see you married, Catherine—and to

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leave you willing to survive me and be happy without me. And why not, dear? for shall I not be happier still?"

And so, in sweet mutual confidence, in cheerful resignation, and in patient hope, the summer passed, and autumn arrived in its glory.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE RETURN.

Come home!—there is a sorrowing breath
In music since ye went,
And fragrant flower scents wander by
With mournful memories blent.
The tones of every household voice
Are grown more sad and deep—
And longing for thee wakes a wish
To turn aside and weep.

Oh, ye beloved! come home!—the hour
Of many a greeting tone,
The time of hearth-light and of song
Returns and ye are gone!
And darkly, heavily it falls
On the forsaken room,
Burdening the heart with tenderness
That deepens into gloom.—MRS. HEMANS.

NOTWITHSTANDING all her habitual calmness and cheerful patience, Mrs. Clifton began to grow uneasy at her son's protracted stay. He had been absent a year and a month. And even now, instead of setting out on his return, he only wrote of coming home soon. At one time he was at Vienna, at another at Berlin, then at the Hague, progressing, indeed, but very, very slowly towards England and Liverpool, from which port he intended to embark. Every letter that came from him at this period, was opened and read with visible uneasiness by his mother. At length the glad tidings came, a letter from the mid-ocean, brought by a swift sailing packet-boat that had spoken the vessel in which he had embarked. He was hastening home, and might now be expected at any hour. The news contained in his letter excited the invalid so much upon the evening of its reception, that she passed a sleepless night, and rose the next morning weaker than she had ever been before; so weak, indeed, that she was obliged, in coming down stairs, to lean on the arms of Catherine and her maid for support. And when she reached the parlor, she was compelled to recline in an easy-chair, propped up by pillows, and with her feet supported by a foot-cushion. But her cheerfulness was undiminished. She gave many directions as to the adjustment and adornment of the room, and the preparation of certain dainties. Lastly she called Catherine to her side, and took her hand. Catherine did not appear to the best advantage, with her plain, dark gingham dress, and her chestnut hair divided simply above her forehead, rippling in tiny wavelets around her broad temples, and gathered into a twist behind. This plainness of style did not become her

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strongly marked features. And the lady saw it, for she gazed thoughtfully upon the girl awhile, and then lifting her hand, disengaged a portion of her tresses from the comb, and let them fall, turning into natural ringlets down her cheeks, saying—

"There, Catherine, when hair curls naturally and voluntarily, it is certain that the face it belongs to requires it so, and that it should be permitted to follow its nature, for nature does all things well. Why don't you always wear your hair so? It is so much prettier."

"Because, dear lady, I never thought it of any importance how my hair was fixed, so that it looked neat. But I will wear it this way, if it pleases you."

"It does. Your face is not a classic one, dear Kate, and none but a classic face can bear that attic simplicity of style. Your countenance is a very noble one, Kate, but its very nobility is hard and stern, without the softening shadow of these ringlets nature has bestowed upon you. There now, look in the mirror, my little Oliver Cromwell, your face is much more womanly than before."

Catherine found it so. The soft, bright, drooping curls shaded and rounded her large, square forehead into beautiful proportion to her other features, and softened the expression of the whole. No girl but is pleased to see herself improved in beauty, and it was with a bright blush, half of pleasure, half of modesty, that the maiden returned to the lady's side.

"Now, dear Kate, you must leave off that dingy gingham, and wear white wrappers in the morning. It is early in the season, and you can wear white a month longer yet, and by the end of that time, I suppose, the world will expect you to wear black. You have no white wrappers though, my dear?"

"No, madam, I never had one."

"Well, you have two white cambric dresses, without ornament, they will do for morning dresses. Do me the kindness to wear them. Nay, now, Catherine, my dear, no hesitation, I will have it so. Go at once and put on one of them."

Kate complied, and in a short time returned to the parlor—by this change in the style of her toilet, almost transfigured, yet without the loss of her noble characteristics. One thought troubled the maiden, the question:—What would Clifton think of this? How would he take it? Would he suspect that she had dressed for his eyes? If he did his suspicions would be well-founded. And the consciousness of this truth, suffused with blushes the cheeks of the ingenuous girl, and heightened all her beauty.

There was no certainty of Major Clifton's advent that day—he might come any day, but nevertheless they hoped for and expected his arrival. By a change in the hours, the stage now reached L——— at noon. And Mrs. Clifton had ordered dinner in the full expectation of having her son's company at the meal. Nor were their hopes destined to

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disappointment. A little after one o'clock, the carriage that had been sent to L——— to meet the stage, returned and drove up to the door. And Archer Clifton alighted from it, and hastened joyfully into the house. Mrs. Clifton arose to meet him, but, overpowered by agitation and weakness, she sank back into her seat. Her son was before her in an instant, and had clasped her in his arms, and pressed her to his breast, and kissed her fondly many times, and set her back in her chair to feast his eyes upon her beloved face and form, before he noticed how cadaverous, how death-like, she looked; then a startled expression of surprise and alarm sprung into his countenance, and he turned upon Kate, to whom he had not yet spoken, a glance of mingled inquiry, anger and reproach.

"You find me in poor health, Archer; but not worse, my son, than what might have been expected."

"My dearest mother," he began, but his voice choked, and to conceal the emotion he could not entirely suppress, he turned to Catherine and gave her a brother's greeting in silence, but at the same time darting into her eyes a look of stern rebuke from his own, which seemed to say, "You, at least, should have written and informed me of this." And the suspicions excited by Mrs. Georgia rose darkly in his mind, but were repressed again instantly.

"Dearest Archer, I am not usually so ill as I seem to-day. I have never been confined to my bed, or even my chair yet. Only to-day and yesterday, the joy of looking for you has prevented my taking the usual quantity of sleep. I shall be much better to-morrow. Sit down by me and rest, and when you are rested, your room is quite ready for you, if you wish to change your dress before dinner. Catherine, my love, will you go and direct them to serve dinner?"

Catherine left the room and gave the necessary commands. Then she ordered a boy to take Major Clifton's baggage up into his chamber, and went up stairs to show him where to put it. In the meantime, Major Clifton, in looking upon his mother's wasted form, had lost all self-command, and saying hastily that he thought he would change his travelling dress at once, hurried out of the room to give vent to passionate sorrow, no longer to be restrained. He ran up stairs, but paused upon the first landing. Catherine, in leaving his room found him leaning upon the balustrade, with his face buried in his hands, weeping convulsively. To women, there is something really appalling in a man's tears—we look upon them with more than pity—with awe—with something like the feeling with which Mary and Martha must have witnessed the Saviour's tears—with deep reverence be it said. Catherine would have crept by and slipped down stairs quietly, for she had a feeling of self-reproach for having even seen that strong outburst of sorrow; but he stood up, seized her hand, and drew her towards him, exclaiming—

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"Stop, Catherine! You have seen my weakness! Now, tell me why you did not write to me of this? Cruel and selfish girl! were you so intent upon your own projects, that you could not find time to indite a line to let me know that my mother was dying?"

Another burst of weeping prevented his hearing Catherine's gentle explanation, that Mrs. Clifton would not permit her to write. And Kate was not anxious to exculpate herself from an unjust charge; indeed, after once giving her little, meek explanation, she never thought of it again—she only thought of his agony of regret, and only wished to soothe it. He still held her wrist, unconsciously straining it in the strength of his emotion, until it pained her severely. But she did not care for that, she did not even feel it; she only cared to see him weep so convulsively, and losing all self-consciousness, and with it all reserve, she threw her arm around him, and dropping her head against him most tenderly, most lovingly, she said—

"Oh, do not grieve so! do not! see how calm and cheerful she is! Try to emulate her calmness!"

"I loved her, Kate! I loved her more than ever son loved mother before! She was the worth of life to me! I loved her more than ever I loved human being! More even than I ever loved you, Kate!"

This was Clifton's first declaration to Catherine, and a strange time, place and circumstance, and a strange method of expressing his preference had fallen upon them. "I loved her more than I ever loved you, Kate!"

But it did not seem strange to Catherine. It seemed perfectly natural and in order. It did not startle her the least. It did not bring back her womanly self-consciousness, for she answered, meekly—

"I know it—I know you do. And, oh! don't *you* know that I would willingly give my life for hers, if I could restore her, in health, to your affections?"

"And yet you did not even write to let me know she was ill! Oh! girl! girl! you were much to blame for that! It was bitterly wrong."

"I told you, but you did not hear me, that she would not permit me to write; she did not wish to give you pain, or to interfere with your arrangements for the year."

"Catherine, that does not excuse you! Could not your own heart have told you how precious, how inestimable to me would have been every hour of her company when her days were numbered? Could you not have written to me secretly?"

"I never did anything secretly in my life. I should never have thought of doing so. Besides, I could not have had a secret from her, so open, so frank, so noble as she is. No, I proposed to write for you to come home, I intreated permission to do so, but she refused to grant it, and I deferred to

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her better judgment. I would not have deceived her for the world."

"Then I have been unjust and unkind to you, Catherine, but you will pardon me when I tell you—when you see how thoroughly weakened and unmanned I am!"

The gust of sorrow was over, and Kate, with sudden self-recollection withdrew herself from him, deeply blushing, and hastened down stairs, and the thought of her transient self-forgetfulness rendered the girl even shyer than ever.

He went into his room and refreshed himself with a new toilet. And when he entered the parlor, an hour after, no one would have suspected from his handsome, animated face, the existence of the sorrow that lay subdued at the bottom of his heart.

They dined together, and after dinner Catherine thought it best to retire and leave the mother and son alone to enjoy more fully their re-union. When she had left the room—

"How pretty and lady-like Catherine is growing, madam," said Major Clifton, looking after her, but addressing his mother.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Clifton, "lady-like, but not very pretty; Kate will never be pretty; but if she be 'blessed to her mind,' she will be more, she will be handsome."

After spending a long afternoon with his mother, Major Clifton took temporary leave, and went over to White Cliffs, to pay his respects to Mrs. Georgia. Most happily for all concerned, Georgia had just left home for a visit of some weeks at Richmond—ignorant, it is to be supposed, of Major Clifton's arrival. He returned and spent the evening with the ladies at Hardbargain.

The next morning found Mrs. Clifton very much better—and in the evening she rode out, accompanied by Major Clifton and Catherine. Mrs. Clifton's cheerfulness infected all the party—both upon this evening and afterwards. Her decline was so gradual, so painless, that she never took to her bed—but when weakest, sat in the easy-chair in the parlor, often with a little light knitting in her hands, that she would leisurely work upon, or drop into her lap, to be resumed at pleasure, while she conversed with Catherine and Major Clifton, or listened while one of them read, or both sang. There never were more pleasant, serene days, than those of the invalid's gentle decay. It was genial, pensive autumn; the fall of the leaf without the house, and the fall of the leaf within.

Catherine was now the housekeeper. She had through the increasing weakness of the lady—so gradually slidden into this office, that she scarcely knew at what time its whole burden had accumulated upon her. One morning while Catherine was in the store-room giving out meal and bacon to the negroes, Mrs. Clifton and Major Clifton occupied the parlor alone. He had been reading to her from Jeremy Tay-

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lor, but seeing that she had dropped her knitting, and was sitting back with a look of weariness, he thought it time to desist and close the book.

"Dear mother, you are fatigued; will you have anything? What shall I bring you?"

"Nothing, my son. I am not wearied more than usual, and it will pass in a few minutes."

The lady was silent for a little while, during which Major Clifton refrained from conversation. And then, after some little thought, she raised her eyes until they met his own and looking at him full in the face, she asked—

"When are you going to marry Catherine, Archer?"

Major Clifton started violently, and looked at the lady in silent astonishment.

"Nay, pray answer me—my question is an earnest one."

"My dear madam, you have taken me by surprise!"

"Necessary bluntness, Archer."

"Very Oliver Cromwellish, madam, my mother."

"You must excuse it, dear Archer. You did not open the subject to me, therefore, feeling more anxious upon that affair than any other on earth, I am forced to broach it to you. But you have not answered my question yet."

"Dear madam—what—exactly—was it?"

"When are you going to marry Catherine?"

"Upon my honor, my dear madam, I have no intention of marrying Catherine; nor have I ever given her reason to suppose so."

"Ah! I had thought, or rather, I had hoped otherwise," said the lady, relapsing into silence, while Major Clifton subsided into painful thought. Again the dark suspicions insinuated by Mrs. Georgia, arose in his mind, to be repressed again with loathing; and he said indignantly to himself—"It is not true! I can never believe her to be an intriguante. Georgia is mistaken—Georgia's grateful and affectionate interest in my welfare, leads her to unjust suspicions of others. Kate is noble-hearted—Kate is true—is truth itself. It would be misery to believe otherwise."

Mrs. Clifton gently interrupted his silent self-communion, by saying—

"Well, Archer, since you have no intention whatever of marrying Catherine yourself, you can have no reasonable ground of objection to her union with another?"

He looked up in surprise and anxiety, but soon the startled expression subsided into calmness, and he replied, coolly—

"*Catherine's* union with another! Oh! the supposition involves an impossibility."

"I know you think so, Archer. I know you feel perfectly secure of this sweet girl, and just as easy about her as if she were secured to you by all the chains that church and state can forge, and that is the reason why you take things so coolly, and listen to your pride. But I tell you that it is not as

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you think. You are not for ever secure of Catherine. Our moods of mind, and our views of things, change with time. And however the maiden may feel or think now, if you hesitate for years between your pride and love, she will naturally arrive at the conclusion that many a generous-hearted woman has come to before her, and say to herself, 'Well, I cannot be happy myself, but my life must not, therefore, be wasted—I can make some one else happy,' and being scorned by one she loves, give herself away to one who loves her."

Major Clifton started to his feet, with all the dark side of his character uppermost, exclaiming—

"Let her attempt it! I would stop such a marriage at the altar! Catherine is mine, or nobody's. She could not repel my claim."

"Dear Archer, sit down; do not excite yourself or me. Remember, I am in a dying state," said the lady, as the best means of calming him.

"Dear madam, forgive me—forgive me—but why introduce this very embarrassing and highly exciting subject? I have had conflict enough in my own bosom about it. I love your favorite, I love her jealously, fiercely—I admit it—but there are objections and difficulties, which time, or a new set of circumstances, may remove; meanwhile, I could not bear to see her snatched from me. But there is time enough—even if I should decide upon such a step, there is time enough. Kate is very young yet."

"But you are not very young, Archer."

"I know it, dear madam. I have arrived at that age at which men do not make imprudent marriages for love."

"But when they too often make unhappy marriages of convenience. Dear Archer, it is a false and sinful principle that keeps you and Catherine apart. Will you spoil two lives by your pride? Your hesitation between inclination and prejudice, weakens you and destroys her."

"'Prejudices,' dear madam! Well, I suppose they are prejudices, but just think of the horror of having Carl Kavanagh, the farm laborer, for a brother-in-law, and being called 'uncle' by his ragged progeny!"

"Oh, Archer, your inhumanity shocks me—they are human creatures after all—this Carl and his family."

"And don't you see besides, madam, that if I should marry Catherine, and introduce her into society, the first question would be, 'Who is she?' and the answer by some good-natured friend, 'The sister of one of his farm laborers,' would expose us to contempt, if it did not rule us out of good company."

"Archer! Archer! can it be that you weigh these falsities with the deep realities of life?"

"It is a deplorable thing, indeed, that a girl of such noble nature should come of such ignoble parentage."

"No! it is a congratulatory thing!—or would be so, if it

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were not such a usual thing! Archer, you will find more moral worth, and it may be more mental worth, among the so-called lower classes, than among the higher; for instance, among the men, look at some of their brows, of Shaksperian height and breadth—think what they would be with cultivation! And I tell you, with all their disadvantages, the lower classes will give to our republic the greatest of her future great men."*

Major Clifton remained in deep thought for awhile, and then taking the hand of the lady, said—

"My dear mother, the objections that I have advanced are those that have arisen in my mind, from time to time, giving me much pain. I wished to hold them up before myself, as I have just done, in order to see what they really consisted of, and looked like. I have seen the worst of them, and in their ugliest light, and they will not deter me from taking to my heart the girl I love. I have weighed them, and the whole mass is light in the balance with my need of Catherine. I will marry her. I will go and tell her so now. And the ceremony shall be performed whenever you think proper."

"Whenever *Kate* thinks proper, my dear Archer," replied the lady, smiling.

At this moment a servant entered and delivered a note to Major Clifton. It was from Mrs. Georgia, announcing her return to White Cliffs, and begging the company of Major Clifton to tea that evening.

CHAPTER XXX.

BETROTHAL.

'Twas thy high purity of soul,
Thy thought revealing eye
That conquered all my pride of heart,
Thou wanderer from the sky.—W. G. CLARK.

MAJOR CLIFTON held the note between his finger and thumb in a fit of abstraction, while a pleasant, contemplative smile dwelt on his face.

"Well, are you not going to answer it?" asked Mrs. Clifton, adding, "The servant waits."

"Oh! answer it! yes! what is it about?" he exclaimed, starting out of his reverie, and glancing at the note again. Then he arose, penned a hasty excuse, and delivering it to the messenger, dispatched him. Returning from this business, he said, "No, I cannot leave home this evening; since I have come to a decision, I wish to have a good, confidential talk with my little Kate. How much I have to say to her, how much to draw from her, if I can. What a prison delivery of thought and emotion it must be on both sides, if I can get her to talk! But she is so shy, except when under some strong, disinterested feeling for another. Move her sympathies, and she forgets herself and loses all reserve; otherwise—she is so shy."

*The history of most prominent men of the day verifies the prediction.

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"Yes, very, very shy, *to you.* Kate's heart and brain are sealed volumes to you. It will require the easy intimacy of long, domestic companionship, to find out all her excellencies. Her husband will love and esteem her far more dearly and highly than ever lover has done—but hush, here she comes."

The door opened, and Catherine entered, from her morning's household duties, with her little basket of keys hanging on her arm.

"Come hither, dear Kate," said Major Clifton, holding out his hand. Catherine put her little basket in its place, and quietly went to his side. He encircled her waist with his arm, and holding both her hands captive in his own, looked fondly in her face till she dropped her eyes in confusion, and then he said, "Dear Kate, my mother here, who loves you almost as much as I do, if that were possible, wants to know when you will make us both happy, by becoming my wife and her daughter."

He paused for an answer, never removing his eyes from their gaze upon her glowing cheek.

"Yes, I am very anxious to know what day you will give yourself to us entirely, dear child!" said Mrs. Clifton, and she also paused for a reply.

Catherine, in extreme confusion, glanced from one to the other, and finally dropped her eyes again.

"Come, dearest Kate, it is but a word—the name of some day in the week whispered very low," said Major Clifton, in her ear.

"Yes, let it be soon; let it be within a week, dear child. My time is short, Kate, and I wish to bless your marriage before I go hence. You know I told you that I could calculate the progress of decay, and the length of life with some accuracy, and I tell you now that my days are numbered."

"Come, Kate, if you cannot speak, give me one of your short, quick nods. Come, this is Saturday—shall we be married to-morrow?—next day?—Tuesday?—Wednesday?—Thursday?" Catherine, whose heart had been filling all this time, now burst into tears. He drew her head upon his shoulder, where she sobbed awhile, until he stooped and whispered, "Dear Catherine, try to calm yourself—do you not see how you excite our mother? there, lift up your head, and go to her; and both of you together arrange all these little matters as mother and daughter should, and she will let me know the result," and tenderly withdrawing his arm, he passed her round before him, and stood her beside Mrs. Clifton's easy-chair, and arose and took his hat and left the room, with the same happy, self-contemplative smile upon his lips. Kate sank down by the side of Mrs. Clifton, and dropping her head upon the lady's lap, wept afresh. The gentle invalid put her hands upon the maiden's shoulders caressingly, but did not seek to arrest the current of her emotion. It was

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plain that the girl herself sought to stay her tears, for, between her sobs, she exclaimed—

"Forgive—excuse—I know it's weak, wrong—it is only because—I'm grateful!"

The fit of emotion exhausted itself, and she lifted up her face, wiped her eyes, and said—

"Lady—"

"Call me mother, Kate."

"Mother! heart's dearest mother! do you think he mistook me?"

"How, Kate?"

"I couldn't speak! Indeed, indeed I could not! But I want you to tell him, *mother*, how grateful I am, and how happy! Tell him, *for I never can*, how much and how long I have loved him. My heart has been single to him ever since I first knew him. I will try to make him a good wife—indeed, indeed I will. And where my weakness or my ignorance fails, I will pray to Heaven daily for more strength and light. Oh! I know what a sacrifice of pride and prejudice he has made for love of me—tell him so, mother, and tell him—"

"No, dear Kate, I will not tell him that. He has made no sacrifice. Nonsense. And if he had, you are worth it all, all—his wealth, rank, position, pride and all! Be true to yourself."

"Oh, what am I, that he should indeed prefer me to all the ladies in the great city that he has left; and what can I bring him but my love and my duty—all my love and all my duty!"

"And do you undervalue these, Kate? Why, they are the treasures of treasures. And you would judge them so in another's case. But here you are fond and blind. Now, dearest Kate, I am so anxious to see you the wife of Archer. And I wish to enjoy that pleasure as long as I can—when shall it be?"

"Mother, you and he have made me what I am, and given to my life all its worth and value—now what can I do but give back myself and life to you? Dearest mother, fix it as you will, I shall be happy, any way."

"Thursday, Kate?"

"Yes, Thursday, dear mother."

The lady then embraced and dismissed her, and settled herself back in her chair to take a necessary nap.

Catherine left the parlor in that half-blissful, half-fearful trance that falls upon one when the great life's desire and hope is about to be realized—happy beyond measure, but somewhat incredulous that this could be really fact—really the "sober certainty of waking bliss," and no dream, and foreboding some stroke of fate that should snatch the too great joy from her. Major Clifton was standing within the open front door, looking out upon the glorious autumn land-

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scape and the changing foliage of the trees, some of the outer branches of the latter burning so red that they seemed a-fire in the rays of the afternoon sun. But he turned to Catherine, with a buoyant smile and step, and led her out upon the piazza. The habitually grave Archer Clifton was almost gay. He was in that happy state of mind that all will recognize who have ever had a severe, long standing moral conflict brought to an end, in which the reason, conscience and heart are all satisfied. The struggle between the prejudices of rank and the passion of his soul was over, and the strongest had conquered, and now reigned alone, and a fine, vigorous, healthful joyousness had taken the place of all reserve and gloom and eccentricity; so great and happy was this change, that Catherine felt no more the strange, shy fear of him that had ever placed her at such disadvantage in his presence. He led her to a shaded seat at the end of a piazza, where there were no intruders but a glancing line of sunlight, and nothing to disturb them louder than the rustle of a falling leaf. And there he poured out the long hoarded mysteries of his heart, talking on and on as the hours passed, until successively the sun went down, and the stars came out, and clouds arose and hid them, and shrouded the piazza in darkness. And still he talked—"an' he would talk his last," not even heeding the approach of a servant, until Henny's voice was heard, asking Miss Kate to come and give out tea and sugar for supper. Then he arose, and half unmindful of the presence of the maid, he said—

"This is very sweet, dear Kate, very, very sweet—to be able to say to you everything without reserve—to tell you all the long withheld secrets of my soul, and see you listen with such deep interest; but when will you be equally frank with me—when will you show me your heart?"

The next day Major Clifton rode over to White Cliffs to pay his respects to Georgia.

The beauty received him with unrestrained joy; but in the conversation that ensued, reverted to what she called "The intrigues of that low born manœuverer, Miss Kavanagh," asking him if he had observed a great change in Mrs. Clifton, ascribable entirely to her influence?

It gave Major Clifton great pain to hear Catherine traduced in this manner, but he believed Mrs. Georgia to be perfectly sincere in her opinion, and only the victim of a mistake. He told the lady so, adding—

"I am about to give Miss Kavanagh the highest proof of confidence that one being can give another. I am about to take her for my life's bosom friend. We shall be married in five days."

Had a bullet sped through her heart, she could not have given a more agonized bound. Then she struck both hands to her temples, started hastily half across the floor, paused again as if distracted, and suddenly cried out—

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"You shall not do it! By my soul, you shall not do it! You never, never shall become the dupe of that woman! I have entered the lists with her. I mean, that to save you, I have done so, and before I leave them, I will prove her false and treacherous. God show the right!"

Major Clifton gazed upon her in wonder. The strong emotion that she had exhibited, imposed upon him, for there was no doubting its *reality;* and far from suspecting its *cause*, an unhallowed passion for himself, he ascribed it solely to her strong conviction of Catherine's unworthiness, and to her disinterested regard for his own welfare. And when she came and threw herself upon the sofa beside him, and besought, with all the eloquence that passion and the demon could lend her, that he would pause and not hurry on to his ruin, his confidence in Catherine's integrity was shaken to the foundation. And when at the end of an hour he rode home, he reached Hardbargain as miserable as the doubt of one beloved can make a man. If love has the Divine power of transfiguring its object until faults are excellencies, suspicion possesses the demoniac faculty of deforming its victim until virtues seem vices, and under its influence the highest and best gifts of the maiden, her intellect, virtues, and graces were turned against her; her talent seemed intriguing art; her meekness and humility became meanness and sycophancy, her piety, hypocrisy; and her girlish shyness the sinister reserve of conscious guilt.

It was well that on his return he met Catherine only in his mother's presence, where deep regard for the lady constrained him into something like forbearance; though even then his moody manner excited some uneasiness in the bosoms of the two ladies. When Catherine left the room to order dinner, the conversation that ensued tended to strengthen his newly revived suspicions. Mrs. Clifton told him, that with his consent she would like to leave the farm of Hardbargain to Catherine, as a testimony of her esteem and affection.

"And for a more practical reason, too," she said, "for you know, my dear Archer, that the estate of White Cliffs being entailed—if you should die before her, and without male children—Catherine and her daughters, if she should have any, would be left homeless. But if I leave her this farm of Hardbargain, it can make no difference to you during your life, and if Catherine happen to survive you, it will secure her a home. What do you think of this plan, Archer? You look grave and troubled. If you have the slightest objection, I will not carry it out, of course."

"Surely I have not the least right to object, my dear mother; your property you have made by your own labor, and improved by your own admirable management."

"You have the right of nature, my dear Archer; and I see by your gravity, that you dislike the arrangement; therefore it shall not be made."

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"You mistake my thoughtfulness, dear madam. If I am somewhat grave, it is upon another subject. Believe me, I have not the slightest fault to find with this plan; *neither does it take me by surprise, I have been prepared for it months since.* Mrs. Georgia Clifton informed me that such was your intention."

"Is it possible? How could Georgia have known anything about it? But I suppose she has heard me drop words to that effect. May I hope then, that this purpose meets your approbation, Archer?"

"Certainly, madam, it can make no material difference, if Kate is to be my wife. And, if she were not to be so, I should be quite as well pleased."

Unconscious of the double meaning of his words, the lady then inquired into the cause of his gloom.

"Merely a fit of moodiness, dear mother; the reaction, perhaps, of yesterday's joy; a mere depression of spirits, which a brisk gallop over the hills will throw off."

"If you are inclined for a ride, Archer, you can do me a service at the same time, if you will go to L———— and bring out Mr. White, the lawyer, to draw up my will."

A spasm of pain passed over the handsome countenance of Major Clifton, and he said—

"I will do anything you please, dearest mother; but surely there is no necessity for haste in this matter."

"Archer, *there is.* Besides, my mind will be easier when it is done. And Archer, lastly—bring with you a clergyman. I wish to receive the Holy Communion."

Major Clifton made no farther objection, but left the room to order his horse; and in less than half an hour he found himself on his way to L————. Mrs. Clifton summoned Kate. When the girl entered, she found the lady on the verge of fainting from over-exertion and extreme weakness. Catherine grew pale with sudden fear, and her hands trembled as she poured out and administered a restorative. Somewhat revived by the cordial, Mrs. Clifton said—

"Kate, write two notes, one to Mrs. Georgia Clifton, and one to your brother Carl, asking each of them to come here this evening to witness a deed—or rather *two of them*, my dear Kate—the signing of my last will and testament, and the solemnization of your marriage—for both must be hastened, Kate. My dear child, take your pen and write at once."

Deeply troubled, extremely agitated, yet struggling to govern her feelings, Catherine found the writing materials and penned the two notes; but when she had finished them, in the abstraction of her great grief, she misdirected them—and sent the note intended for Mrs. Georgia to Carl Kavanagh, and that intended for Carl to Mrs. Georgia. When she had dispatched these notes by different messengers and returned to the parlor, Mrs. Clifton said—

"Call Henny, my dear Kate, and let her assist you in getting me up stairs. It has come at last, Kate."

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Almost dismayed by sorrow, Catherine rung the bell that brought the servants into the room. And between them they raised the lady to her feet. Mrs. Clifton took a long look around the room, as though she were taking a last leave of every dear familiar object in it; and then suffered herself to be supported up to her chamber.

Mrs. Georgia Clifton was pacing her chamber-floor, in all the distraction of excited evil passions, racking her brain for an expedient to ruin her rival and break off the impending marriage, when the "spirits that tend on mortal thoughts," furnished her with one. A messenger entered and handed her a sealed envelope, directed in the handwriting of Catherine Kavanagh. She opened it in surprise, curiosity, and even in some degree of vague, guilty fear, and found within the misdirected note of Kate to Carl. It read simply as follows:

"DEAR CARL:—

"Mrs. Clifton is almost dying. She says you must come to the house this afternoon, at four o'clock, to meet a lawyer and a clergyman, and with Mrs. Georgia Clifton, to witness the signing of her last will, and also my marriage. Do not keep her waiting, "CATHERINE."

This note contained no expression of esteem or affection for the invalid, or regret at her approaching death. No! for Catherine's veneration and sorrow were too earnest, too real, to be a matter of wordy formula. But in the evil heart of Georgia this simplicity was turned against the girl. And her first idea, revealed in her smile of satisfaction, was to show this mis-sent note to Archer Clifton, and bid him look and see with what perfect coolness and indifference the writer could announce the approaching demise of her benefactress. But while this thought was revolving in her mind, Satan suggested a surer plan—a deadly stratagem. And at this inspiration of the fiend, the dark face of the baleful woman lighted up with demoniac joy. She seized the note again, and rushed to the window, and scanned the hand-writing, Georgia inherited all the imitative talent of her father, the portrait-painter. Catherine's hand-writing was unique: small, square letters, with heavy strokes, chirography peculiar to herself, yet easily imitated. Mrs. Georgia copied a few selected words —compared them with the originals, and was satisfied with her work. Next she wished to procure note paper, exactly like it. Catherine's note was written upon neutral-tinted paper, that had been given her by Major Clifton. Mrs. Georgia recognized it as some that had belonged to him. She thought there might possibly be a few stray sheets in the writing-table of the library. She went thither, and after a diligent search, found a single sheet. This she took with her, and returned to her chamber, locked herself in, and sat down to finish her task. Perfectly imitating the handwriting of Catherine, she forged the following letter:

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"DEAREST CARL:—

"My long slavery is almost over. The old woman is at her last gasp, and wants you to come over this afternoon at four o'clock, to witness her will and my marriage. You see I have succeeded in catching the aristocrat, and in wheedling his mother into giving me Hardbargain, in my sole right. Am I not a triumphant diplomatist? When she is dead, and I am married, and mistress of White Cliffs and of Hardbargain, as I shall probably reside at the principal seat, I intend to let you this farm, on the easiest terms. Never fear Major Clifton's interference. You know *I* know how to manage him.

"CATHERINE."

When she had completed her demon-work, Georgia carefully examined it. It satisfied her. She smiled, and muttered—"*Any one* who ever saw Catherine's queer hand-writing, would feel safe in swearing this to be hers." Then she folded it in the form of the other note and placed it in the original envelope—and threw it, broken-sealed as it was, upon the table, exclaiming—"There!—

"'I have set my life upon a cast,
And will abide the hazard of the die.'"

In the meanwhile, Catherine watched by the bedside of Mrs. Clifton, awaiting the return of Major Clifton, with the clergyman and the attorney.

About three o'clock in the afternoon the party arrived. The professional gentlemen remained in the parlor, while Major Clifton went up into the chamber of his mother. As he approached her bed, and perceived the fearful change a few hours had wrought in her appearance, and recognized the sure approach of death, he was so shocked, so overwhelmed with sorrow, that it was with the utmost difficulty he could sustain his self-command.

She held out to him her wasted hand, saying, quietly—

"My dear Archer, I wish to have the marriage ceremony between you and Kate performed this afternoon, if you please."

"Certainly, my dear mother, it shall be as you desire," he replied, repressing a great groan—but desirous, above all things, to gratify that dying parent. "Shall it be *now*, mother?"

"No, dear Archer, not just yet—I want the holiest things left for the *last*—I want the will drawn up, witnessed, signed and sealed *first;* then the marriage ceremony performed; and last, I wish to receive the Holy Communion—after which, I shall be ready to depart."

"Mother—the minister and the lawyer are below stairs, awaiting your leisure—they will remain over to-night. Do not disturb yourself."

"My good Archer, I made Catherine write to Carl Kava-

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nagh and to Mrs. Georgia to come to see me this afternoon, they have not yet arrived. Please go and send again for them."

Archer Clifton bent and kissed his mother's forehead, and went down stairs. In the hall he saw Carl Kavanagh, hat in hand, waiting.

Carl immediately advanced, and said—

"Ah! Major Clifton, I am waiting here to see my sister, to return to her this note, that she has sent me by mistake. I think—perhaps you can explain it." And he handed to Archer Clifton the mis-sent note of Catherine to Georgia.

Major Clifton understood the mistake at once, and retaining the note, replied—

"Catherine wrote two notes, summoning yourself and Mrs. Georgia Clifton to Hardbargain, this afternoon, to witness the signature of a certain document. She placed them in envelopes, and in her haste misdirected them—that is all. Pray remain here, while I ride over home, and bring Mrs. Georgia."

Carl Kavanagh sat down in the hall, and Major Clifton mounted a fresh horse, and galloped over to White Cliffs. Dismounting at the gate, he threw the reins to a servant and entering the house, sent a message to Mrs. Georgia.

The servant returned, and requesting Major Clifton to follow, led the way up to Mrs. Georgia's own room, opened the door, announced the visitor, and retired.

Archer entered the room, and found the lady seated at her work-table, but looking pale and anxious. By her work-box lay the envelope of Kate's true note with the forged note in it.

"Ah!" said Major Clifton, after greeting her, "I see that you have received Kate's note."

"Yes—one that was never intended for *my* eyes, but of those of a fellow conspirator."

"Conspirator, madam!"

"Yes, sir. Do you surmise all the consequence of these mis-sent letters? Look at this!" she said, throwing it to him, "written by Miss Kavanagh, but directed by mistake to me. Yes, look at it! Examine the envelope! and then read the contents of the note!"

Major Clifton glanced at the superscription, opened the note, and read it through with a cheek growing pale and paler—until he finished it—then tossed it from him, and burying his face in his hands groaned aloud. He had not the slightest suspicion that the infamous letter was a forgery—no!—he had not a single merciful doubt that it was the work of Catherine—nay, he would have sworn to the handwriting, if called upon to do so in a court of justice—he would have sworn to it though Kate's life hung upon his oath! Any one else who had ever seen her peculiar chirography would have felt constrained to do so, if requested—save two—she

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who lay dying at Hardbargain—and she was to know nothing about it—and he, the rejected lover, now far away, who would have cast that note aside in high disdain, and staked his honour on her truth. Clifton groaned aloud, in the bitterness of disappointed esteem. Resentment itself was swallowed up in sorrow, and he exclaimed—

"Oh! would to God she had died, or I had, before I knew this!"

"Rejoice, rather, that you are saved!"

"*Saved*, madam!"

"Yes—*saved*. You will never marry her, now. You are perfectly justifiable in breaking with the unmasked traitress!"

"And in shaking the last few sands in my mother's glass of life. The discovery of that girl's treachery has driven me to despair—it would kill my mother! No, lady! I must marry her, that my beloved mother may depart in peace."

"Marry her!" screamed Georgia, with the cry of a wounded hyena—"marry her, and sacrifice all your hopes of happiness, for the sake of keeping quiet the last few hours of a dying woman! You will not do such a thing!"

"My hopes of happiness, did you say, Mrs. Clifton? Ah, lady, can you not comprehend, then, that when one at my age has discovered—beyond all possibility of doubt—the total unworthiness of one the most beloved on earth—the heart's most cherished darling—the life's dearest hope—" down broke his voice, and down dropped his head upon his hands—then rising, impatiently, he exclaimed—"I say, can you not comprehend that I have *no* hopes of happiness left? I loved her so! I trusted her so! I sacrificed such strong prejudices for her! And I was as happy as a converted sinner, when the struggle was over and the sacrifice made. I could have shaken hands with her freckled-handed brother, and claimed kindred with all his rugged race! And now!—I am unmanned! I am a fool!"

"No, you are not, unless you marry her. You are not the first noble-minded man that has been duped by a bad woman! You feel it as every generous-hearted man would. But it will pass. Life has many chances, and you will be happy yet. *My* friendship is not much, perhaps, but is it not something?"

"Yes—yes—yes—yes—sweet friend, it is much," said Archer Clifton, slowly—half soliloquizing, as he took and held her hand. Then suddenly starting, as out of a reverie, he exclaimed—"Mrs. Clifton, you know my errand here—it is to bring you over to Hardbargain, for the purpose of which you have already been advised by the note."

"To be present at your mad marriage, among other things?"

"Yes."

"I will not go! I cannot! I cannot witness such a sacrifice."

"As you please, dear Georgia. I suppose there is no im-

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perative necessity of your doing so—good-bye!" and he arose, and lifted his hat from the table.

"Yes! good-bye, indeed!" replied Georgia, bitterly—"good-bye, indeed! if you persist in your mad purpose!—I shall remain here, and hope to the last. But when I hear that this marriage has really taken place, I leave White Cliffs within the hour!"

"You will think differently, dear lady, and I shall see you again, shortly."

"Never!—as the husband of that traitress."

He did not reply. He raised her hand to his lips, and left her.

Left to herself, mad impulses seized the disappointed woman. At one instant she was impelled to seize the forged letter, and rush to the death-bed of Mrs. Clifton, and there denounce her favorite as a hypocrite and a traitress. But a moment's reflection convinced her that no art of hers could induce the dying woman to think evil of the excellent girl she herself had educated. That on the contrary, such a step might possibly result in her own signal defeat and exposure, and the everlasting anger and contempt of Archer Clifton. Her brain was beginning to reel, and her self-confidence to wane. In sudden fear she looked around for the forged letter, intending to burn it. It was nowhere to be seen. Then she recollected that Major Clifton had, on departing, picked it up, and put it in his pocket. And sick with disappointed love, jealousy, hatred, and fear, she tottered towards a lounge, but ere she reached it, fell upon the floor. In the meanwhile, Major Clifton, riding at full speed, reached the farm-house.

On reaching Hardbargain, Major Clifton went immediately to Mrs. Clifton's chamber. He found her still sinking. She inquired, in a faint voice, whether he had brought Mrs. Georgia. He replied, with perhaps a pardonable ambiguity of speech, that Mrs. Georgia was too much *indisposed* to attend. Then she said that she supposed Mr. White (the clergyman) would consent to act in her stead. She informed him that the attorney had been with her, and had drawn up her will according to her instruction, and she requested that the parties might be assembled in her room to witness the signing. Major Clifton left the chamber to summon them, and soon returned, accompanied by the lawyer, the minister, Carl Kavanagh and Catherine. The will was then read, after which the lady was raised up in bed, and supported in the arms of her son; the document was placed upon a portfolio and laid before her, and a pen dipped in ink and presented to her. She signed her name, and immediately sank back exhausted. The two witnesses affixed their signatures, and the will was delivered into the custody of the attorney. A restorative was administered to the invalid, and she was arranged comfortably upon her pillows. Then she took the hand of her son, and whispered—

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"Let the marriage ceremony be performed at once, dearest Archer."

He pressed that wan hand, laid it tenderly down upon the coverlet, and spoke apart with the clergyman, who occupied the chair beside the head of the bed. The minister solemnly arose, drew a prayer-book from his pocket and opened it. Major Clifton went quietly and spoke a few words in explanation to the lawyer and Carl Kavanagh, who then approached the bed-side. Lastly, he took the hand of Catherine, and led her up before the minister. The marriage ceremony commenced. It was performed according to the ritual of the Protestant Episcopal Church. But when the great question was put to the bridegroom—"Archer, 'wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together, after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor her,'" etc.—instead of answering, according to the ritual, "I will," he replied by a grave and formal bow, with silent lips, "that scarce their scorn forbore." When the corresponding question was put to the bride, Kate too replied by a gentle inclination of the head, but her true heart responded sincerely, earnestly. When the last benediction was given, and when, according to the old formula, the bridegroom was to salute his bride, he merely touched her cheek with cold lips, and passed her on to his mother, who held out her arms to embrace her daughter. The singularity of Major Clifton's manner was scarcely noticed, or it was ascribed to the solemnity of the attending circumstances. Mrs. Clifton now desired that all, with the exception of her son and daughter and the clergyman, should bid her adieu and leave the room. Her request was complied with, and when they had retired, she signified her wish to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper with her children. Major Clifton was constrained to decline, upon conscientious scruples; for how could he partake of the Sacrament of peace and brotherly love, with his heart consumed with indignation against his newly-married bride? Catherine, however, participated in the Holy Communion, while he looked on with surprise, mixed with a degree of horror. When the sacred rite was over, the minister of God took an affectionate leave, and departed. When the minister was gone, and they were left alone together, the dying mother beckoned her son and daughter to come and sit near her. They obeyed her, and she addressed them in a few words of earnest, affectionate counsel, blessed them, and resigned herself to rest. Her eyelids closed calmly, and her breathing was gentle and regular; they had to mark attentively before they knew that it grew fainter and fainter. Once she opened her eyes, and, smiling her old, reflecting smile, said—

"Dear Archer, I have often tried to detect the exact moment of falling asleep. I watch now, to see if I can seize the precise instant of passing from mortal to immortal life."

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And she closed her eyes again. After a few minutes, she said—

"Sing to me, dear Kate! You know—Heber's death hymn."

Catherine bent and kissed the pallid lips of the dying woman, and then her voice arose, sweet, clear and spiritual as angels' songs, in that immortal requiem—

"Vital spark of heavenly flame,
Quit, oh! quit this mortal frame;
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,
Oh! the pain, the bliss of dying—
Hark! they whisper, angels say—
Sister spirit, come away—

At the end of the first stanza, she murmured, faintly—

"Your voice, too, dear Archer."

His voice arose now in unison with Catherine's, and they sang the remainder—

"The world recedes—it disappears;
Heaven opens on my eyes; my ears
With sounds seraphic ring.
Lend, lend your wings; I mount, I fly!
Oh, grave, where is thy victory?
Oh, death, where is thy sting?"

They ceased, and looked upon the marble face before them. It was still in death, but there remained upon the countenance the impress of the ecstatic smile with which the spirit had taken its flight—

"Her death
Was like the setting of a planet mild."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE POISON WORKS.

'Tis slander;
Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of the Nile.—SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Archer Clifton saw that all indeed was over; when he looked upon that mother-face, the first which had ever met his conscious gaze in life; that old, familiar face, which seemed to him coeval with his being, and a necessary part of it; that face the most intimate, the most loving, the most faithful which had ever shone upon his path of life;—and felt that it was lost for ever; that the light of those quiet eyes was darkened for ever; the sound of that kind voice silenced for ever; the smile of those calm lips fled for ever;—when he clasped that mother-hand, and felt that those dear fingers would close upon his own cordial grasp never, never more;—oh! when he felt that all was over, over, "finished, done and ended," he fell upon his knees by the corpse, dropped his head upon the cold, inanimate bosom, and broke into convulsive sobs.

Weeping freely, Catherine knelt by his side, and put her

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arm around his neck. He was unconscious of her presence, until, after giving way to sorrow for a few moments, she lifted up her head, and wiped her eyes, and controlling her own emotion, sought to console him—

"Do not grieve so, dear Archer," she murmured, with her arm again around him, "do not grieve, but *pray*."

Then indeed he suddenly grew calm, unclasped the gentle arm of Catherine from his neck, arose slowly from his kneeling posture, took her hand, and raised her upon her feet, and regarding her with a stern and sorrowful countenance, said, in severe rebuke—

"Come! madam! no more hypocrisy now! None here at least! It is useless hereafter! You have accomplished your design. You *are* a 'successful diplomatist,' and your 'long slavery' *is* now over."

Catherine lifted her eyes, dilated with sorrow and amazement, and fixed them on his face an instant, but the look she met there, the expression of mingled suffering and severity, such as might have sat upon the brow of Brutus, when the feelings of the man and the duty of judge strove in his bosom, awed her into silence before him. She could express no surprise or grief—ask no explanation. The old shyness and fear came over her, and her eyes fell, and her cheeks paled. Again he spoke in the same stern, sorrowful tone—

"Ay, cower with conscious guilt! You are discovered! And you should have been unmasked before *her* to-day, but that I did not wish to embitter her last moments! that only saved you! Come! leave the room that you desecrate with your presence! Leave me alone with my dead!"

But instead of obeying, she stood like a statue before him.

Then he took her hand and led her through the door, and closed it behind her.

Catherine stood there where he had placed her, amazed, confounded, unable to move a step forward, until the thought of practical duties, now pressing upon her, gave her strength, and she passed on to summon those whose office it was to prepare the dead for burial. But amid all the multifarious tasks that devolved upon her at that trying time, as newly installed and unassisted mistress of the house, she could not for an instant forget her awful bereavement, or the dreadful anger of her husband.

He came out of the room of death at last, and passed Catherine on the stairs, and his stern, averted countenance at that moment almost broke her heart. But she went on enduringly with her tasks. Often she raised her soul in prayer to God for help. Once, during that desolate night, she found time to open her Bible, and her eyes fell upon this text: Romans viii. 28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God"—she paused upon the text, repeating,

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"'all things,' *all things*, even this! I will believe it!" And her face grew beautiful with divine faith, and she reverently closed the book, and went on her way comforted. She had need of fresh strength and comfort, indeed, to meet a fresh trial. On coming down stairs she met Henny, who seemed to be on the look out for her. And who placed a note in her hand. It was from Major Clifton, and read as follows—

"I desire that you keep your chamber to-morrow, or, at least, refrain from insulting the memory of the dead, by appearing at the funeral.

"ARCHER CLIFTON."

She nodded her head slowly, meditatively, with a look of sweetest resignation; then beckoned Henny to follow her, and returned to her chamber. There she sat down and wrote the following note—

"I will absent myself from the funeral, since you wish me to do so; I will also keep my room, if you desire it, when I remind you that there is no one to supply my place in the household arrangements for the solemnities of the day.

"CATHERINE."

She sent this by Henny, but received no reply to it. Construing silence into consent, she went about the house as usual attending to her duties.

In the meantime, Major Clifton sat in his study, awaiting an answer to a note he had written to Mrs. Georgia, apprising her of the recent events, and requesting her to come at once to the house. He had not to wait long; his messenger returned, and informed him that he had met the lady on her way to L———, to take the stage coach to Richmond. The man, at the same time, gave the intelligence that Mr. Kavanagh waited in the hall, to know if he could be of any service to Major Clifton on the present occasion.

"Show him in," said Major Clifton.

The man went out and soon returned, accompanied by Carl, whose face expressed the most profound and sincere sympathy.

"Set a chair for Mr. Kavanagh, and retire, James.'

The man obeyed, Carl seated himself, and in person repeated his condolences, and his tenders of service.

In reply, Major Clifton took from his pocket the forged note and laid it before him, saying, coldly—

"There is the note your sister wrote to you, and sent by mistake to Mrs. Georgia Clifton. Read it."

Carl took it up, wondering what might be the use of reading it *now*, but as he glanced over its contents, his eyes grew wide with astonishment, and when he had finished it, he laid it down again, exclaiming—

"I am confounded!"

"I should think so, sir!" coldly remarked Major Clifton.

"She speaks of letting *me* the farm! I never had the slightest desire to rent the farm, and before I heard the will

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read, I had not even the slightest idea that Mrs. Clifton designed to leave it to my sister!"

"Ah! Really?" asked Mr. Clifton, ironically.

"Really and truly, and sincerely and positively, I had not."

"Tautological asseveration is no evidence. Why should she have written to you thus if you had not?"

"How do I know, sir? I tell you I am amazed! And if I did not know, beyond all possibility of doubt, the handwriting to be Catherine's, I should say that she did not write, and that she never could have written such a letter."

"Which means plainly this, that if there did not exist the most positive proof to the contrary, you would fain deny it," sneered Major Clifton.

"Yes, sir!" answered Carl, boldly. "If the proof positive to *my mind*, as well as to your own did not exist, I *would* deny it, and I *do* deny any personal agency or knowledge about it whatever! I say to you that I am amazed! It is incomprehensible to me how Catherine could have conceived, much less written such a letter! And above all things, it is inexplicable how she should have written so disrespectfully of Mrs. Clifton, whom she loved and venerated so much."

"Or whom, for certain purposes, she *pretended* to love and venerate so much."

"She *did*, sir! She really *did*. She was sincere in her esteem and affection. She was sincere in all things."

"I know she affected rare sincerity."

"It was no affectation, Major Clifton. I have known her from childhood—it was truth. And I tell you, I scarcely believe my own eyes! I scarcely believe that I am awake when I see that letter! I am confounded!"

"Well, sir!" said Major Clifton, sternly, his whole manner changing, "*I*, at least am not so confounded as not to know that she never would have written such a letter to you, had you not been the confidant of her plans. And *you* are not so confounded as to be ignorant, that, after such a development, I am constrained to forbid you the house, and to interdict all communication between your sister and yourself."

There was something of Catherine's own nobility in the manner of Carl's reply. He stood a moment with his forehead thrown back, as if in calm, unimpassioned thought, then he said—

"Major Clifton, my sister is now your wife, and you have, doubtless, the perfect right to control her actions—neither do I accuse you of undue severity in this affair, for, under like circumstances, I should, perhaps, be tempted to act in the same way. I cannot account for this letter. For the present, it must remain unexplained. Nor can I exculpate myself any more than my sister for the odium of a suspicion, which God knows I am willing to bear with her, since I cannot clear her of it. You do not know how dear to an only brother's heart is his only sister. Yes! I *am* willing to share

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the odium with her, hoping, *knowing* that it will pass away in time. And then, Major Clifton, you will feel more pain at the recollection of the injustice you have done us, than I feel now in suffering it. You will be more angry with yourself than I could be with you. You will reproach yourself more bitterly than I could reproach you, were I never so indignant. And I am not indignant at all. I could not be so! All feelings are subdued to calmness in the sacred proximity of the unburied dead in the next room. One thing only remains to be said. It is this: I cannot continue to live upon this place, under the cloud of the master's ill opinion. My engagement as manager of this farm terminates with this year, I shall be glad, if before the time expires, you will provide yourself with another overseer."

"As you please, Mr. Kavanagh. Yet I should not have sent you away with your young family."

"You are considerate, sir!" said Carl, bowing, then adding—"I presume you have no further commands for me, Major Clifton?"

"None, Mr. Kavanagh."

"Good-night, sir."

"Good-night."

The next day was the day of the funeral. Before the people began to assemble, Catherine, impelled by an irresistible desire to gaze once more upon the face of her beloved friend, found herself at the door of the front parlor in which the corpse was laid out for burial. But here, with her hand upon the lock, she hesitated, and finally stifling her crying want, turned away, saying within herself—"No, I will not intrude. I will be guided by the spirit as well as by the letter of his commands. He will not accept my love. To yield him perfect unquestioning obedience is all the earthly comfort I have left." And she began to retrace her steps.

Major Clifton came out of the back room and met her face to face.

"What were you doing near that door, Catherine?"

"I wished to take a last look at her dear—" Here Kate burst into tears and wept convulsively a few minutes—during which, Clifton watched her in stern sorrow. Then controlling herself, she said, "I wished to look once more, and for the last time, upon her beloved face. But when I reached the door, and was about to enter, I remembered your commands and turned back."

Clifton, who had never taken his eyes from her, groaned aloud. Then he said, gravely and sadly—

"Catherine, if any feeling of penitential sorrow inspires your wish to go there, go, in Heaven's name! And may the sight of that dead face bring you to repentance."

She turned to thank him, and ask him what he wished her to repent—but before she could find words, he had re-entered his study. Catherine passed into the room of death, turned

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down the pall, and gazed upon the face of the dead. It had changed very much—every furrow and every wrinkle was softened out of it, the forehead was as smooth as the brow of childhood, an ineffable, a divine repose spread like a dream of Heaven over the features. Catherine's tears were stayed, the convulsions of her bosom were calmed, her soul was awed and exalted as she gazed upon this countenance, so beautiful in death. But at last her full heart revealed itself in a look of unutterable tenderness and devotion, and she murmured, in low, slow, gentle tones—"You always loved and trusted me, and for your dear sake, I will be a good wife to your son. Yes! whatever he may be to me, for your dear sake, as well as for his own, I will be a good wife to him. Hear my vow—I cannot think you dead. This is all I see—this beautiful, calm clay; but I know your spirit hovers near. Hear my vow. Hear me promise, with God's grace, to dedicate all my faculties of brain, and heart, and hands to his interest and happiness! to bear all things, to endure all things, to hope all things, even to the end of life, come what may;" she stooped and sealed her vow by a farewell kiss upon the brow and lips of that beloved face, and reverently covered it, and—not to abuse her privilege by too long a stay—slowly left the room. She never saw that face again.

Within an hour afterwards, the company began to assemble in great crowds, for Mrs. Clifton was widely known and greatly respected and beloved. The clergyman, who was to perform the burial service, arrived, and the solemnity commenced. In the mean time Catherine sat in her distant chamber, listening to the faint, inaudible sound of the minister's voice that reached her from afar, or else engaged in prayer, but always calmed, strengthened and consoled. Many people at the funeral wondered greatly why the young bride had not appeared with her husband; but some one imagined it to be because she was too much overcome by sorrow to be present, and told it as a fact, which was at once believed, and circulated. And that—like many an other idle falsehood, satisfactorily silenced conjecture. When the services were over, and the funeral procession had left the house for the grave-yard—when Catherine felt that her more than mother was now indeed gone, gone, gone—she cast herself upon her bed in the last agony of sorrow.

Little household cares. What blessed though humble ministers to sorrow they are—gently drawing away the mourner from the contemplation of her grief, and compelling attention to themselves. So they give occupation, and induce forgetfulness—aiding in their humble way the great comforters, religion and time. An hour spent in bitter tears and sobs, and then the little domestic duties came hovering about her like little children, claiming her care. There was a large supper to be prepared, and bed-chambers to be got ready for friends who had come from the remoter parts of the country

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and who would therefore remain until the next morning. And so Catherine arose and refreshed herself with cold water and a change of dress, and went below stairs to superintend the operations of her cook and house-maids.

When everything was in readiness, she went into the drawing-room, where she received the returning visitors with a pensive, gentle dignity that won all their hearts, proud conservators of rank as they were. And that evening, young girl and new bride as she was, she presided at the head of the long table, filled with the country aristocrats, with all the ease and grace of a lady "to the manner born." Preoccupied by one earnest thought and purpose, she never once remembered herself as a new comer into their ranks, or troubled herself with the question of what might be their opinion of her. For the rest, her courtesy was graceful and dignified, because it was natural, and not assumed—the effect of benevolence and kindly social feeling, and not of pride, vanity, or ostentation.

The next morning, after breakfast, the guests departed. And many and cordial were the invitations to their houses extended to Catherine by all—even the haughtiest defenders of the sacredness of caste. Catherine received all these civilities with a gracious nobleness, that sat naturally and well upon her. And all this—the very evident esteem and respect of her neighbors, and the admirable manner in which Catherine received them, would have highly gratified the pride of Major Clifton, could anything except her exculpation from suspicion have pleased him. As it was, he witnessed it all with a moody brow, and sneering lip, and murmured to himself—

"Better and better, 'Maria Teresa.' You should have seen more of the world, before you threw your diplomatic talents away upon me, and my country neighbors."

Well, at length they were all, to the very last guest, gone, and Major Clifton and Catherine were left alone, left standing together in the hall, whence they had seen the departures.

Catherine, hesitating between her fear of intruding upon his notice, and her dislike to leave him abruptly and rudely, stood—no longer self-possessed and noble—but with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and with the color deepening in her cheek, in embarrassed silence, wishing that he might say something to her, something to explain the nature of that dark cloud that had arisen so strangely between them.

He broke the silence by saying, coldly—

"Mrs. Clifton—" She started and colored, at hearing herself addressed by her new name. "It is my intention to make White Cliffs our future home. I desire that you be ready to accompany me thither to-morrow morning."

Catherine bowed her head in acquiescence. And with a cold nod, he placed his hat upon his head and walked forth.

Catherine went in, and occupied the remainder of the day

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in directing the labor of her servants who were all employed in setting the house in order after the late, confusing events, in packing away goods, and covering up furniture, and in preparing generally for the closing up of the building.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DEDICATION.

Stand up, look below,
It is my life at thy feet I throw,
To step with into light and joy,
Not a power of life but I'll employ
To satisfy thy nature's want.—BROWNING.

THE next morning after breakfast, the family carriage was announced to take them to White Cliffs. Catherine put on her bonnet and shawl, and stood waiting, until Major Clifton, drawing on his gloves, came forward and attended her to the carriage door. He handed her in, entered himself, took the seat opposite to her, and bade the coachman drive on. The whole distance between Hardbargain and White Cliffs was passed over in perfect silence by the parties. Major Clifton preserving a stern gravity of demeanor, and Catherine scarcely daring to lift her eyes, lest she should encounter that severe but sorrowful gaze that almost broke her heart. She longed to inquire—

"Oh, Major Clifton! What is this that has arisen between us? Give the misery a name! Tell me?" But the shyness and fear she had always felt in his presence, and doubly felt when he was reserved or displeased, and above all, the bashfulness of new bridehood, forced her into silence.

At last the ride was over, and the carriage stopped before the main entrance of the mansion-house.

The plantation laborers, in their holiday clothes, marshalled by the overseer, were assembled upon the lawn, and the house servants in their "Sunday's best," with the house-keeper at their head, waited on the piazza "to pay their duty."

When the carriage had drawn up, Major Clifton alighted and assisted his bride to get out. He led her up the marble stairs to the front door. The housekeeper with a curtsey, stepped forward to attend her. But with the courteous kindness that Major Clifton seldom omitted, he waved her aside, merely saying—

"Mrs. Mercer, send all these women about their duties, and tell Turnbull to disperse the men. I do not wish to be disturbed. There is my pocket-book—give them what they want—only let me be quiet."

"And give them my love and good-wishes," murmured Catherine, shyly, but not wishing to dismiss them so coldly, for her desolate heart had been comforted by the looks of sincere respect and affection with which they had seemed to receive and accept her as their new mistress.

Major Clifton merely threw up his chin with an assenting nod, muttering—

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"The popularity-seeking instinct of the diplomatist." He then conducted her into the drawing-room, led her up its whole length, and seated her upon a sofa with ironical ceremony, saying—

"Mrs. Clifton, you are welcome to White Cliffs."

Startled by his tone, she looked up, lifting those long, drooping lashes, until her soft, dark eyes at last met his cold, rebuking gaze.

Then his whole aspect changed, and from having been sarcastic and scornful, became grave and severe. Standing before her, he folded his arms, drew himself up, and keeping his eyes fixed steadily upon her face, said—

"And now, lady, listen to me. The aim and object of your life is accomplished—consummated. You have at length attained the position to which you have long aspired, for which you have long and deeply and successfully played. You are numbered among the ladies of the county aristocracy. You bear the haughtiest name of all. You are Mrs. Clifton, of Clifton."

All this time her eyes, wide open, dilated, fascinated by surprise and grief, met his stern gaze in sorrowful wonder. He continued—

"Yes, madam, you wear my name such as it is! You rule my house such as *it* is! But, as for its poor master, lady, he is your most humble servant, but no lover!"

Her eyes fell beneath his sarcastic look, and she was tempted to wish herself dead.

He continued—

"I leave here in a few days, for the purpose of raising a company to serve in the coming war with Great Britian. You will remain here at White Cliffs to take charge of affairs during my absence. If you really hoped to flaunt in the city this winter, I am sorry for your disappointment. But there are duties as well as dignities attending the position of the mistress of Clifton, and these must not be neglected. I shall exact their performance. The overseer and the farm laborers, as well as the housekeeper and her assistants, have orders to obey you in everything. Good-morning, madam."

And so abruptly he turned upon his heel and left her. One moment she sat there amazed, confused, with her hands pressed upon her temples; and in another, losing all feeling for herself—feeling only for him, she sprung to his side, and caught his hand, exclaiming—

"Stay! For the love of Heaven, stay! one moment—only one moment, while you tell me. Oh! *after all*, have I made *you* unhappy?"

"Unhappy! You have been and you are the bane of my life!"

"*How?* Merciful Heaven, *how?* when I only wish to consecrate mine to you!"

"Do you dare to ask me?"

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"Well!—tell me—tell me! *how* can I remedy my fault—whatever it is? What can I do to comfort you?"

"*Nothing* but refrain from troubling me with your company or conversation, when it is not absolutely necessary. Again—good-morning." And so he freed himself from her clasp, and left the room.

She tottered backwards and fell into a chair, her head dropped upon her hands and she gasped—

"All-merciful Father, do not forsake me now, for I am desolate—I am desolate." And she sat despairing, fallen, the very image of utter self-abandonment. She sat there until aroused by the voice of the housekeeper, who entered the room, came up to her side, and spoke to her twice before she heard—then—"What did you say?" she asked.

"I have come to receive your orders for the day, Mrs. Clifton."

"I——— Please to manage, to-day, without my advice. I—I am not well—and very, very weary."

"You look so, indeed, madam. There is a fire kindled in your chamber, will you go up there and lie down, and let me bring you a cup of tea?"

"I—— No, I thank you—I am much obliged to you. But—only leave me here to rest."

The housekeeper went and closed the shutters: stirred the fire, set a screen between it and Catherine's seat, and quietly withdrew.

"Oh! this will never do!" said Catherine, trying to rouse herself from her stupor of despair. "This will never do. To-day I have made a bad beginning; but to-morrow I must rise and be as active and efficient as if I were happy."

She met Major Clifton again at dinner. The meal passed almost in silence, and immediately after it was over, he took his hat and left the house. She did not see him again until tea-time, after which, he went and spent the evening in his study. Catherine felt the need of calm thought, to understand her position and duties; and of prayer, to gain strength and patience to perform them. She spent several hours in reading the Scriptures, in meditation, and in prayer, and then, comforted, retired to bed. She arose early the next morning, strengthened and consoled, with a very clear perception of her circumstances and responsibilities.

"My path through this intricate trouble is made very plain. I must discharge every domestic duty and every social obligation, just as faithfully, if not as cheerfully, as though I were a happy wife," she said. And she went down stairs, and gave her orders for the day.

When Major Clifton came down into the breakfast-room he found a quiet cheerful scene—a sunny window, a bright fire, a well spread breakfast-table, and Catherine herself, in her simple morning-dress, looking calm and placid. There was an expression of curiously blended anger and admiration

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and amusement on his face, as he flapped his dressing-gown around him, and dropped himself into the easy-chair by the fire, giving her "Good-morning," and hoping that she was well.

"As usual," replied Catherine, handing him the paper that had just come from the village, and ringing for breakfast.

When the meal was over, he reseated himself in the arm-chair, reading the newspaper, while Catherine still sat at the board, pouring out bowls of coffee, and filling plates with toast or muffin, to send to the old and sick among the negroes—these being always supplied with their meals from the mistress's table. Major Clifton glanced over the top of his paper at her, sometimes in irony, sometimes in sorrow, always in doubt. And she—unpleasant as his manner was, felt glad to have him near her. I really believe that she had rather he sat there and made faces at her, than not sat there at all. And she felt lonesome and dreary when at last he left the room, put on his riding-coat and left the house. As yesterday passed, so passed to-day—she meeting him only at meals. And so a week passed on. It is not easy to be very heroic for a day, or two, or three days; but when one day follows another, each with the same continuous, extraordinary demand for fortitude, it is strange, indeed, if heart and flesh do not fail under the task. Nothing but Divine Providence can give the requisite strength of endurance. In the presence of her husband, Catherine was calm and cheerful; but often in her private hours the sense of desolate bereavement would come over her, and gusts of tears and sobs would follow. These, like the summer gusts of blessed nature, would always refresh her, and she would be enabled again to take the comforting promises of the Bible to her heart, in her favorite text—"And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God," and to ask God's blessing again upon her resolution "to perform every domestic and every social duty as faithfully, if not as cheerfully, as though she were a happy wife." And yet it was very hard to do this. It was very dreary to feel shut out from her husband's heart; to meet him every day with the same stern, sorrowful brow, or in variation of that, with the same ironical smile. It was difficult to go on with a repulsed and aching heart doing mere mechanical duty. She could not have done so but that two powerful principles sustained her—an invincible love for her husband and an unwavering faith in God.

One morning, about two weeks after their arrival at home, Major Clifton sat alone, reading, in his study, when the door opened, and Catherine entered. It was the first time that she had intruded there, and he looked up, threw aside his book, arose, and pushed back his chair with a look of annoyance.

"Excuse me for interrupting you, but may I speak to you for a few minutes?"

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"Speak on, madam, but oblige me by being brief. Pardon me—take a seat," he said, handing her a chair, and resuming his own.

Catherine sat down, felt very much like another fit of sobs, and tears, but restrained herself, and said, quietly—

"Major Clifton, whatever this is between us—"

"I must remind you that this is a prohibited subject of discussion, madam," he said, interrupting her.

"I will not talk of it again—how can I, indeed, when I do not know what it is?"

He made a gesture of angry disbelief, and begged her to come at once to the object of her visit.

"Well, then, I wished only at first to say, that whatever be the cause of this cruel misunderstanding between us, it will pass away. You look at me in surprise and doubt—but it *will*, Major Clifton—it *will*—it *must*—there is no truth and reality in it, and it *must* be temporary. I have thought it all over, very sadly, but very calmly and clearly, and I know that it *must* be transient. My faith bridges over this impracticable present in our lives, and I see the future, when you will understand me. I never did anything to offend you in my life. And God, to whom I have committed our cause, knows my innocence, and in His good time He will make it plain. It must be so. The promise of the All-Merciful, the Almighty Father, is pledged to the Right!"

He turned away from her, with a stamp of fierce displeasure. He turned away from her savagely, because he felt that, had he looked and listened a moment longer, he should have abjured all his evil thoughts, and snatched her to his bosom—she was so patient, so hopeful, so beautiful with truth and love, that he could scarcely resist the impulse to fold her to his heart—false as he deemed her to be. As it was, he suppressed the true instinct—obeyed the false suspicion, and turning again sharply upon her, demanded to know, once for all, to what this new piece of hypocrisy tended.

"I mean this, Major Clifton—that as our estrangement must needs be transient—do not, under its influence, let us do, or omit to do, anything that may hereafter affect, unhappily, our social relations with others."

"As——*how*, Mrs. Clifton?"

"*Thus.* The country families have all called upon us. It is high time that we return their visits, if we mean to keep up the connection."

"Oh! Ay! Excellently well thought of, Maria Teresa!" he sneered.

With a passing look of distress, she said—

"I only fear that our pleasant intercourse with the neighbors may not be so easily resumed, if they have reason to suppose that we treat them with indifference and neglect."

"Admirably calculated, madam! A contingency has presented itself to your diplomatic wisdom, that never would

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have occurred to my simpler mind. So, you wish to confirm your position, and extend your connection here in the county! Well! the aristocrats of R——, have certainly taken you up with a zeal and determination that is surprising. But when they have once made up their haughty minds to patronize a new comer, it is wonderful to what length they will go. But you may thank your own fine diplomatic talents for that!"

"Diplomatic talents! What diplomatic talents? So many people have 'thrust' that questionable 'greatness' upon me, that it mortifies me. No—I know the only value and currency I have among the country people, is the value you have given me—the stamp of your name and rank. And I—I do not wish to disparage it. I wish to appear worthy of it—that is all."

"And you really believe what you say?"

"Truly, I do."

Again she looked so lovely, in her truth and humility, that he was almost tempted to relent. And again the impulse only made him more unjust.

"In a word, madam, what do you wish me to do, for I begin to weary of this discussion. Nor is it well to subject myself to the influence of your fascinations, for I candidly admit to you that I am sensible of them, as others have been."

"I only wished to propose to you to take a day, and drive around the neighborhood with me, to return the calls that have been made upon us."

"Very well, madam, I am at your command whenever you please to call upon me for that service. When do you propose to go?"

"At your earliest convenience."

"Will to-morrow do?"

"If you please."

"To-morrow then let it be. And now, Mrs. Clifton, have you any further commands for me?"

"Thank you—no," she answered very sadly, and turned to leave the room—hesitated, came back, and resting her hand upon the study-table for support, because she was trembling, said, "Forgive me—and let me speak to you one more word, will you?"

"What is it?"

"It is so sorrowful to be misunderstood. Please, do not mistake me in this matter. For myself, I do not care to follow up my acquaintance with these county people. I have lived all my life without extensive social intercourse. I have lived all my life in strict domestic retirement. I am so used to it that it is natural and agreeable to me. Indeed, I prefer it—but—"

"Well?"

She was suddenly silent. She wished to say, "But with *you* it is otherwise. Living in the county, *you* need, or will

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hereafter need an extensive neighborhood connection. And for *your* sake, I would not alienate these people by neglect." But she could not say it. Her old shyness, and a delicate fear of seeming to wish to place him under an obligation, kept her mute.

"Well, Mrs. Clifton? If such seclusion is so agreeable to you, why do you wish to change it?"

"I owe the ladies some acknowledgment of their civility to us."

"Have you anything farther to say to me?"

"No," said Catherine, and with an involuntary gesture of pain and distress, she turned and left the room, with all her generous thoughts unspoken. When the door had closed behind her, Archer Clifton started up, struck his clenched hands to his forehead, and pacing up and down the floor, distractedly exclaimed—

"I love her! I love her! It is no use, I *do* love her! Every day more deeply and desperately I love her! In her presence all her unworthiness is forgotten or disbelieved! Yes! yes! her deep hypocrisy, her black ingratitude, my mother's wrongs, all, all are lost to memory! Just now I could have snatched her to my bosom and wept over her falsehood, rather than have cast her from me! Yes, more! I could have implored her forgiveness for ever believing in that guilt which is but too well proved! I love her! She is the pulse of my heart! the soul of my life! She embodies all the meaning of existence to me! Heart and brain—yes!—body, soul and spirit starve, perish for a full reconciliation and a perfect union with her! She is lovely, she is beautiful to me! She always was! Yet, oh! Apple of Sodom, that she is! shall I take such falsehood and corruption to my heart! I must leave the house! must leave the neighborhood! for here I wilt and wither! And she! how *can* she bear it? for I think, with all her falseness, she loves me very much. How *can* she bear life so? How can she rise each morning and go through all the occupations of the day so regularly, quietly, cheerfully, day after day?—omitting no duty, domestic or social, small or great, from the stitching my ripped gloves, to the keeping up of the county connection, in sooth! While *I*, I daily wilt, wither, in this moral mildew—idle, despairing, forgetting all my obligations—forgetting that my country needs my arm! This cannot last! This must not be! I must get away from here! I must raise a volunteer company, and offer myself to the government, and in the tumult of the campaign find forgetfulness or a grave!"

Unable to compose himself again that morning, he rang the bell, ordered his horse, seized his hat, went out, mounted, and rode away.

The next morning Catherine arose early, and among her orders for the day directed that the carriage should be at the door by ten o'clock. At the appointed hour she attired her-

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self with care and taste, and went down into the front hall, where she found Major Clifton in readiness to attend her. They entered the carriage and set out, and in the course of a drive of five or six hours' duration, made the circuit of the neighborhood, calling upon several families. And everywhere Catherine was received with distinguished respect. They reached home again about the middle of the afternoon.

The next few days passed on in the usual dreary routine—except that Catherine knew Major Clifton was out riding every day and all day, and that he was in his study writing half the night. She did not know what this portended until one morning he said to her—

"Mrs. Clifton, you will oblige me by having my wardrobe prepared and packed at your earliest convenience. I have orders to join the —— regiment within a week."

Catherine turned very pale and reeled as if she would have fallen, but grasped the chair and steadied herself, till strength returned.

"All shall be ready for you," she replied.

And he, with a cold bow of acknowledgment, went his way.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"THE MEEKNESS OF LOVE."

So she strove against her weakness,
Though at times her spirit sank;
Shaped her heart with woman's meekness,
To all duties of her rank.—TENNYSON.

CATHERINE remained seated in the chair into which she had sunk, with her face buried in her open palms. Her favorite maid Henny, from the Hardbargain farm-house, was in attendance. Henny had cleared away the breakfast service, with the exception of the silver plate, which was collected upon a salver; and she stood by her mistress's chair waiting, in respectful sympathy; at last she said—

"Miss Kate, honey, if you lend me the keys o' the plate closet, I can put away the things safe, without your troublin' o' yourself."

Catherine lifted her head languidly, and pushing away her drooping hair, exclaimed, quite unconsciously, and as if the words burst of themselves from her overburdened bosom—

"Oh! Henny, if you knew how little heart I have to do anything!"

"I *does* know it, mist'ess, deary; but you mus' jes take a 'flection on to it, honey, an' 'sides how it ain't on'y marster, but mos' in general all the gemmum in the neighborhood, as is gwine far the wars."

Regretting that she had permitted a complaint to escape her lips, yet satisfied that her servant did not understand or suspect the true cause of her sorrow, Catherine arose, and said—

"Take up the salver and follow me, Henny. Idle grief is very fruitless. If we cannot keep our friends with us, it is

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better to prepare for their comfortable living while absent, than to sit down in useless sorrow."

"An' that's the Lord's truth, Miss Kate, said Henny, lifting the laden salver on her head, and settling it steadily, "that's Marster blessed truth! 'Sides which, I has a heap to do myself, to get brother Jack's duds ready, to go long o' Marse Archy."

"Is your brother going with Major Clifton, Henny?"

"'Deed he is, honey—gwine to ride body-servant long o' marster, to wait on him in camp; likewise in field o' battle, to hold his t'other horse, in case his whichest one should be shot unnerneaf of him—Oh, Lord Marster Jesus! what a thing that is to think of! Likewise in soldier's newniform, on the bay horse Billy, which brother Jack would sell his mortal soul any time, for the sake o' dressing fine, an' ridin' a horseback—cussed, infunnelly fool!—I axes your pardon, Miss Kate; don't look so 'noyed, honey; I won't use bad words again—'deed, 'fore my blessed, Hebbenly Marster won't I, honey; but it is so aggravoking, when I comes to think o' what a slave I've made o' myself to brother Jack, ever since mother died, and the 'turn he makes me for it, wantin' to go gallivauntin' off to the wars in soldier's clothes, an' a long tailed horse! Here has I been 'jecting some o' the most illegible colored men in the neighborhood, an' bein' of an old maid, sake o' takin' care o' him, 'cause he's delicy in his health, an' he to be wantin' to go leave me! An' he, with a 'sumption in his breas', to want to go; 'sposing of hisself gettin' his feet wet sogerin'! An' he 'blige to wear a tar plaster on his ches,' to be campin' out an' layin' on the naked yeth! An' knows he can't congest nothin' but rabbits an' partridges, an' wants to go where he'll have to live offen roas' tators, like Gin'al Marion an' his men, in the Resolutionary War! It mos'—mos'—mos'—breaks my heart!"

And with that Henny set down the salver and began to cry, while her mistress opened the plate closet.

"Put them in, Henny, and I will see what can be done for you afterwards," said Catherine.

Henny obeyed, and then said, as they left the room—

"If you could 'suade Marse Archy to leave poor Jack, poor sickly fellow, at home, an' take some o' the other young niggers. Der ain't one o' them but 'ould be 'joyed to go. Der's Dandy now, 'ould be willin' to go to his everlastin' ruination, sake o' ridin' body-sarvant long o' marster—"

"I will speak to Major Clifton, Henny. You know him to be kind and considerate. And I am sure, he is not aware of Jack's pulmonary affection."

"Yes he is, Miss Kate, honey! 'Deed he knows all about Jack's 'fection for him! High, honey! ain't Jack been own man to Marse Archy ever since they was boys together? An' didn't Jack wait on him when he wur at College, and ole Miss pay extra for him? 'Deed she did, honey! 'Fore my blessed

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Hebbenly Lord, did she! An' he knows all 'bout Jack's 'fection for him, and he knows Jack 'ould follow him to the ind o' the world, an' jump off arter him! Lord love your heart, Miss Kate, ther ain't no dog marster's got, loves him more faithful 'an brother Jack does."

Kate sighed very deeply, with a preoccupied air, but answered—

"I will speak to Major Clifton in your behalf, Henny—now go and ask Mrs. Mercer to come to me in my own chamber."

And Catherine passed on to her own apartment, and Henny went her errand. Very soon the housekeeper entered the chamber, and found Catherine busily engaged among linen, stockings, cravats, and other "belongings."

"I want your assistance, Mrs. Mercer, in preparing Major Clifton's wardrobe this week."

"My dear child, I am so sorry! But I have been waiting for an hour to speak to you. The truth is, I have just got a letter from my son-in-law, who writes that my daughter is very, extremely low, with the bilious pleurisy, and wants me to come right over to L——— immediately, without loss of time, and I thought I would ask you for a leave of absence, till she got better."

"And, certainly, I could not refuse it, Mrs. Mercer. I am sorry your daughter is ill."

"And, my dear child, I was going to ask you if you could let me have one of the mules this morning, and I would send it back to-morrow?"

"The weather is too cold, and the journey too arduous for a woman of your age to perform it in that manner. Tell Dandy to put the horses to the carriage for you."

"The carriage, dear honey, I shouldn't think of such a thing. As many years as I have been living in the family, I never used the carriage once. The mule will do very well, if you will let me order him?"

"Mrs. Mercer, why not? I shall not want it to-day. To-morrow Dandy can bring it home."

"God bless you, child! you are so good-hearted! It is a sin too to leave you, so thronged as you are with work."

"No, I can get—get through," replied Kate, with the same troubled, preoccupied air that had marked her manner the whole morning. Mrs. Mercer soon after took leave and departed.

An hour after this, Catherine heard Major Clifton enter the hall door and come up stairs. To her surprise, he paused before her chamber door and rapped. When she opened it, he said—

"Will you favor me with your company in my study for a few minutes, Mrs. Clifton?"

Catherine immediately laid down her work and followed him.

When they reached the study, he set her a chair near the

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writing-table, and dropping into another, drew a portfolio before him, opened it, and turning out a number of papers, said—

"Mrs. Clifton, I told you, some weeks since, that at my departure, and during my indefinite absence, I should be obliged to leave this estate under your charge?"

"Yes," answered Catherine, attentively.

"I am well aware that it is undoubtedly an onerous burden and responsibility for one so young, but, when you feel it so, remember that you, yourself, courted the position, and must be content to take the toils with the honors, real or imaginary."

Passing over his bitter jibe, Catherine said—

"You need not doubt in leaving all to my care that all will go well. I am not twenty yet, it is true, but I have had much work and much experience for my age, so that every year I have lived since ten years old has counted double. You need suffer no anxiety in trusting me."

He looked at her countenance, at once noble and meek in expression; he remembered the life of toil, self-denial, and devotion she had lived; he even recollected a certain text of Scripture which said, "By their *fruits* we shall know them—do men gather *thorns* of *fig trees?*" but the demon of cherished suspicion whispered, "'Twas all done for a purpose," and he hardened his heart, and replied—

"Oh! madam, I have no doubt or hesitation in placing the plantation under your care, and I shall have no anxiety in leaving it so for an indefinite period; not only because I have much faith in your natural talents and acquired experience, but, also, because I have more confidence in your self-love. And knowing that *you* know our interests in the prosperity of this estate to be identical, I rest assured that you will do for it your very best."

"He—in all other circumstances, and to all other people—so noble, so liberal, so charitable—he never speaks to me but to upbraid me!" was the thought that presented itself to Catherine's mind, but with the loyalty of her nature she repelled it, saying, within herself, "It is because he has what he thinks condemning evidence of my unworthiness—would he but charge me! would he but tell me what it is?"

"Will you give me your attention, Mrs. Clifton?" he asked, breaking into her sad reverie.

Catherine bowed gently.

And he took down the "farm-book" from a shelf, opened it, and laying it before her, entered upon a series of details and explanations on both debt and credit sides of the accounts, with which it is not necessary to trouble the reader. After two or three hours spent in looking over bills, comparing them with receipts, calculating results, etc., he closed the book, replaced the papers in the portfolio, clasped it, and turning around to Catherine said—

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"You understand, now?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"As for these heavy notes that will fall due the first of January, you must contrive an interview with the holders, and get them renewed upon security—as I said before, remember."

"I shall not forget."

"No, or if you do, the holders of the notes will bring them to your recollection in not the pleasantest manner. And now, Mrs. Clifton, I wish you to keep a vigilant eye over Turnbull, and hold him to a strict account. I *suspect* the man. I never have been able to understand how, with such a heavy force of negroes on this plantation, it has been necessary to hire about a baker's dozen of white laborers, all of them, you understand, his own relations—brothers, sons, and nephews! I have reason to mistrust the fellow, but no time to look after him. Hold him to a strict account, Catherine."

"Suppose, for the coming year, you should place my brother Carl here as overseer? You have tested his skill and probity."

This was a very unlucky proposition on Catherine's part. He sat back in his chair, and looking at her in steady scorn, said—

"Yes, madam, I *have* 'tested his skill and probity,' and know so well the degree of the former, and the quality of the latter, that I have already forbid him to set foot on my premises or speak to my wife. Do you dare to think that I am your dupe, or his? And now, hear me: In all the directions that I have given you, I have simply desired or requested you to do this or that, but in this matter of your perfidious brother Carl, I *command* you to hold no intercourse with him whatever."

"You shall be obeyed," said Catherine, "you shall be obeyed," and she thought—"Your simplest wish, expressed to that effect, would have had all the power of this arbitrary command,"—but she did not say it. She was never free of speech, least of all to him. And now he arose, as if to conclude the interview. And she recollected her promise to Henny, to intercede for Jack, and always more courageous in the cause of any, even the humblest, than in her own, she gently detained him, by saying—"I wish to speak to you about the servant you intend to take with you."

"Jack?"

"Yes. You were not home last winter, and you do not know that he was sick with a cough the whole winter, and that he is consumptive."

"I have sometimes thought so, however! Well?"

"Indeed I feel that it is properly no business of mine, and I beg you will excuse my interference. I would not willingly, I am sure—"

"To the point, if you please, Mrs. Clifton."

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"Well, I am afraid that if you take him, and expose him to the unavoidable hardships of campaign life, he will fall sick on your hands, and instead of being a help, be a hindrance. Therefore it is much more for your sake than for the boy's own, that I should be pleased if you would leave him here and take another."

"There is much reason in what you have advanced, Mrs. Clifton. Yet, among all the negroes on the place, there is none but Jack who seems fit for the duty, the others are all too young or too old, or too hopelessly stupid and lumbering."

"There is Dandy, a handsome, likely mulatto, strong and intelligent, dressy and enterprising, the very man for an officer's servant; he would be very proud and glad to attend you."

"Oh! ay! I know that he is anxious to go; but he is your carriage-driver and waiter, Catherine, and I cannot think of depriving you of him."

"There are other careful drivers on the place. Please take him with you."

"Yes—but those other careful drivers are awkward, ill-looking, farm-laborers, accustomed to driving and hallooing after ox-teams."

"Have I been so long used to a carriage, as to be choice in my coachman, then? Please do not think of that."

"And then he is your waiter and messenger."

"Oh, believe me, I do not need him. Pray take him with you. He is so active, intelligent and faithful, that he will be of inestimable value to you in the campaign."

"It is precisely because he is so active, intelligent and faithful, that I am unwilling to deprive you of his services, Catherine—I beg your pardon—*Mrs. Clifton*," he corrected himself, suddenly changing his involuntarily relenting manner into the old sarcasm and scorn.

"Oh, call me Catherine, please call me Catherine," she said, losing half her reserve.

"Why? Do you dislike the other name?"

"No—I like it. I am proud of it—not because it is a high, haughty name, but because it is *yours*. When other people call me 'Mrs. Clifton,' my heart springs with pride and joy, but when you call me so—"

"Ah, now, do not let us grow sentimental, madam! I prefer to call you Mrs. Clifton because I think that the fancied dignity for which you have toiled and plotted so long, and patiently, and successfully, should be constantly brought to your mind."

With a deprecating, imploring gesture, and a brow crimsoned until the purple veins started out, Catherine, pierced by this keen sarcasm, sank into a chair.

Unpityingly, he added—

"And now, Mrs. Clifton, I really must entreat you to excuse me. I expect Turnbull here, every instant, to have a talk about the stock."

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Catherine arose trembling, and left the room; one agonized complaint bursting from her tortured bosom—

"Oh, I would to Heaven this were over—some way!"

He looked after her, with a countenance convulsed with sorrow, groaning—

"*And so would I!* And so would I to God that this were over—*Somehow!* Oh!" he thought, rising again, and pacing the floor—"there is nothing in life so humiliating to an honorable-minded man, as to love and live with a perfidious woman—to be daily tempted by his own heart and her blandishment, to become her dupe and his own scorn! To be hourly on the brink of clasping just so much proved treachery as her form conceals, to a half loving, half loathing bosom! Serpents! Yes, I dreamed of a serpent, last night:—methought I was in the forests of Brazil, and the fatal cobra-di-capello had coiled itself around my neck, and raised its horrid head to mine, and I went to snatch the deadly reptile away, and found it to be only Catherine's gentle arms and noble face. Devils! Never did a demon hide itself under a more deceptive form and face!—with that saint-like blending of nobility and meekness in her countenance. Every time she talks with me, she brings me to the very brink of abjuring my sincere convictions. I must get away from this place, or my mind will become unsettled, deranged. I must hasten my departure, and in the meantime, she shall not talk with me again. She shall not cross the threshold of this room again, or if she does, she shall meet with such a reception that she shall speedily retire." And so, torn with passion, he walked and raved, while Catherine sought her room, and threw herself upon the bed, giving way to a burst of tears and sobs, and crying, in wild rebellion—

"God! Oh, God! Infinite in power and love—do You see me? Do You see me, and withhold Your help? Oh, God! God!" But soon upon her fevered spirit fell the word of the Lord like dew—"All things work together for good, to them that love the Lord." And full of penitence for her impatience, she knelt, and humbled herself "under the mighty hand of God." And then, comforted with love and hope, strengthened with faith and courage, she arose, and went about her work.

Meeting Henny soon after, she told her to be consoled, for that she thought Jack would be let off.

In the afternoon she received a pencilled note from Major Clifton, announcing that he should leave home three days sooner than he had anticipated, namely, on the third day from that date. Leaning against the projecting chimney-piece, she held the note, stupidly gazing at it. But two days were left before he should depart then—she thought—and he was going, really going upon a long and perilous military service, and parting with her deep, unmitigated anger, under the seemingly ineffaceable impression of her utter unworthiness

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—believing her to be guilty of—what? ay! what? for up to this moment she had not the slightest idea of his reason for condemning her. And now she blamed herself for cowardice, in having hesitated to entreat him to inform her of what fault or crime she was suspected, and to give her the opportunity of exculpating herself. And she reproached herself for that failing of the heart, and falling of the eyes, and faltering of the voice, that made her so powerless, and placed her at such a disadvantage in his presence. "Oh, yes, indeed," she said, "I know my manner is enough to convict me; I do not wonder at nor blame him for thinking ill of me, so long as my eyes sink beneath his look. But how can I help it. It must be so while he frowns or sneers. One encouraging word or glance from him, and I could look up and speak." And next she remembered how much he must suffer in continuing to think her unworthy, and in departing under that impression—and at this thought, all that was most generous and benevolent in her nature arose to inspire her with courage, and she resolved to go to him, and, though heart and frame should tremble to meet that dread look of stern sorrow or piercing scorn—to persevere in imploring him to tell her with what crime she stood charged.

But though she had determined upon this act, it was extremely difficult to perform it. All the afternoon and evening he came and went in such hurry, and seemed so entrenched behind his own private thoughts and purposes, that she feared to break in upon his reserve. Once indeed, for the purpose of speaking to him upon the subject, she entered his study, and stood by the table; but he turned around, drew himself up, sat back in his chair, and looked upon her with such sarcastic arrogance, that, abashed and confounded without opening her lips she turned and left the room.

And so the afternoon and evening passed, and the next day, the last of his stay, arrived. All day Catherine sought an opportunity of speaking with him alone. In vain! He was resolved to afford her none. He sedulously avoided her. As a last resort she wrote a note, requesting an interview, and sent it to him. She received an answer stating that his time for the day was all pre-engaged. And so this last day also passed. That night she completed her part in the preparations for his departure, and retired late to a sleepless bed. She heard him come in very late, and enter his room, which joined her own.

At early dawn she arose and looked at the time-piece on her chamber mantel-shelf. It was but five o'clock. He was not to leave till ten. There were five precious hours left yet. And oh! how inestimably precious, if in them she could effect a reconciliation with her husband. They were like the last hours of a dying one, with salvation staked upon them. She felt that the crisis had come, that she must not falter now. She knelt and prayed for strength and courage, as we only

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pray a few times in life—with that impassioned earnestness of supplication that ever bring an angel down "strengthening" us. Then, encouraged, she arose, completed her simple toilet, and went down stairs to her morning duties. The breakfast hour was seven. And oh, she watched the clock as she, unjustly condemned to death, might watch in the last fleeting hours preceding execution—hoping, still hoping for some saving revelation. A little while after seven he came down stairs, entered the breakfast-room, and bowing with his usual cold greeting of—

"Good-morning, madam," sat down.

She rang for the coffee, and then took her place at the head of the table.

He went through with the morning meal, with his customary, reflective leisure. And Catherine watched the hand of the clock, as it travelled on towards eight. She was sick with apprehension. She could not speak to him there, for the servants were in attendance. At last he arose, left the table, and went out to give some final directions concerning his baggage, and the horses and servants he was to take with him. And then he went up stairs and entered his study. It was just eight o'clock, and she had two invaluable hours left yet. As if life and death hung upon their issue, she resolved, come what might, to use them in a final effort for a reconciliation. Pale and trembling in every limb, she left the table, and went up stairs, slowly, holding by the balustrades from weakness. When she reached the study-door she found it ajar, and through it she saw him sitting at his writing-table—not busy, as she had feared and expected to find him, but doing absolutely nothing—with his elbows resting on the table, and his face buried in the palms of his hands—in the attitude and expression of the deepest sorrow and despair. That one glimpse of his suffering face, sufficed to drive every fear but that of anxious affection from her heart—"It is because he thinks me unworthy. I must not leave him to think so longer. Be strong, coward heart," she said, to herself, and then she went in and stood beside his chair, resting her hand, for support, upon the table, trembling with nervous weakness, and blushing with the bashfulness she could not but feel in making this advance, and altogether, in his suspicious eyes, looking very much like a conscious culprit. She stood, unable to utter one word, until he lifted up his head, and seeing her, demanded coldly—

"What is your pleasure, Mrs. Clifton?"

She attempted to speak, but a mute sob was all that ensued.

With a piercing sarcasm, he asked—

"Can I serve you in any manner this morning, madam?"

With a gesture of deprecation and entreaty, she answered—

"Yes! yes! I wish to be put upon my trial! Archer!—Major Clifton! you withdrew your favor from me so suddenly! You never told me why! Oh! tell me, before you go, how I

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have been so wretched as to lose your esteem—and put me upon my defence."

He frowned, darkly, as with both pain and anger, and replied—

"I have had occasion twice before to remind you, Mrs. Clifton, that this is a prohibited subject of conversation between us."

She clasped her hands, in the earnestness of supplication, exclaiming—

"Why? Oh! why? You were always just. You never judged your poorest slave, unheard! Oh! what have I done, or omitted to do? Tell me! Make the charge, and see how I can answer it! Archer!—I mean Major Clifton—forgive it—but for all, it springs so naturally from heart to lip, to call you Archer—because—because there is no feeling of estrangement in my heart, nor can I make it there! Major Clifton, then!—consider!—the greatest criminals have the right of a trial, with the crime of which they are suspected, distinctly and openly charged upon them—with the evidence on both sides taken, and their defence heard, before they are condemned. I know that you would not be otherwise than just. Will you condemn me untried, unjudged, unheard?"

"It is quite sufficient to me, madam," he answered, haughtily, "that the proofs of your turpitude are conclusive to my own mind."

"I know it," she said meekly, "I know it—yet, pause—what would you think of the justice of a judge, who should say to one suspected of crime—'Your guilt is so clear, that it is useless to charge you with it, or to hear the testimony, or to listen to what you might have to say in your defence,' and so proceed to condemn him? Such things were never, surely, done, in the darkest ages, or under the most despotic rulers. And is that guilt, of which I am suspected, of so henious a character as to preclude me from the privilege extended even to criminals—the privilege of a trial?" She paused—but he continued to regard her with a stern, set face, without replying. Drooping over the table, and leaning heavily upon it, she spoke again, and her voice fell in low, but clear, melodious tones, as she said—"God and man, and I, myself, have made you my judge, and the arbiter of my destiny here. It is an awful power. You have made me feel it to be such. It is an awful power, because it is a subtile, invisible power—higher, and deeper, and broader than any law. I have no appeal from it—none! Nor—please to understand me—do I wish for any—for if all the world were to clear me, I should still be condemned, if you condemned me. And oh! listen, and believe me—believe me, for it is from my deep heart that I speak this truth—if you had the power and the will to doom me to death—my instincts would teach me rather to receive death at your hands, than to save my life by appealing from your judgment to another tribunal. I am

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loyal. I am faithful! God knoweth that I am. Let me prove it. Put me upon my defence. Do not—do, do not persist in condemning me, unheard."

"Catherine," he answered, in a softened voice—"you are not condemned; if you were, you would not be standing here at my side."

"What do you mean? good Heaven!"

"THIS," he replied with a sudden change of manner, as though angry with himself for his transient relenting. "This! that oftentimes it happens that the only mercy we can show the guilty, is *not* to bring them to trial! To openly recognize guilt, is to be obliged to punish it. If we distinctly accuse, we are bound to prove, and if we prove to condemn and sentence."

"And is my case such a one?"

"Your case is such a one."

"Yet still I beg to be tried! For if *not* to try them is often the only way to save the guilty, to *try* them is oftener the only way to clear the innocent. Accuse me—hear my defence, and be yourself my judge. I ask no other."

"Of what avail were it to rehearse your acts of falsehood and treachery. You know them this moment even better than I do."

"Falsehood and treachery—just Heaven!"

"Yes, madam, those were the words I used."

"You are mistaken in attributing such wickedness to me; but tell me the grounds of your suspicions; doubtless I can explain them, and clear myself."

He laughed a scornful, sardonic laugh, and replied, "Oh, doubtless a woman of your diplomatic genius is fertile in explanations. Whether you could by possibility clear yourself, is another question; for I speak—not of suspicions but of positive knowledge."

His strong conviction of her turpitude infected her with despair at last. She said, very mournfully—

"I know that it has sometimes happened that the innocent have been tried and convicted—overwhelmed by a mass of circumstantial evidence—and that may be my case; nevertheless, even they have had the poor satisfaction of knowing for what they suffered. Tell me, I beseech you. I will still hope that I can acquit myself. Not for my own sake, Archer, dear Archer—but for yours; it must be so agonizing to be forced to think ill of one we have loved as you once loved me. I suffer very much in the loss of your esteem; but were it possible for our cases to be reversed—were I forced to think evil of you, I do not know, indeed I do not know how I could go on with daily life at all!"

"I think you had better cease discoursing and retire; your diplomatic talent is not in high action this morning; you permit your words to betray you."

"To betray me!"

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"Yes, madam; for if you felt yourself to be innocent, would you not necessarily think very ill of me for treating you as a guilty woman?"

"No! no! I know that to have condemned me so promptly, so unequivocally, you must have, what you think, proof positive against me. But produce it! I am innocent; indeed I am, Archer. I believe in Heaven's justice. I believe that if I call on the Lord, He will sooner or later, in His own good time, enable me to prove it."

"I *will* produce the testimony," he said, going to an escritoir, opening it and taking from it a note in a gray envelope. Returning to his seat, he laid it before her, asking, "Is this your handwriting?"

Catherine glanced at it—it was the envelope she had directed to Mrs. Georgia Clifton, and she immediately answered—

"Yes, certainly it is."

"Ah; it is; when was it written?"

"The last day of your dear mother's life. Ah! now I remember, it was from that day you took your favour from me."

"Yes, madam," he said, withdrawing the fatal note from the envelope, and laying it before her, adding, "Do you acknowledge *this* is your writing also?"

Catherine looked at the note without heeding the words, and raising her innocent eyes with wonder to his face, answered, without an instant's hesitation—

"Yes, assuredly, that is mine!"

Her perfect unconsciousness should have convinced him of her innocence—would have done so perhaps, but that, prejudiced against her, he took her manner to be super-refined art; and determined to force her to the point, he said—

"Would you swear it?"

Catherine took up the letter and examined it.

"Ay! read it, read it."

Catherine read the note, turned deadly pale, fell back in her chair, and let the paper drop from her hands—overwhelmed by the enormous wickedness of the forgery. Scarcely restraining a bitter curse, he picked up the fatal note, pushed the door open with his foot, crossed the hall, and entered his bed-chamber, banging the door after him.

One stunned moment she sat thus, then started to her feet, bewildered, distracted, and with a wild impulse, fled across the hall and into his chamber, and sank at his feet speechless, mute, but catching his hand, and clinging to it. When she struggled and recovered her voice, she exclaimed simply—

"I did not write that letter, Archer. I did not write that letter."

He twisted his hand rudely out of her grasp, and turned away, without reply.

She clasped her hands earnestly, exclaiming again—

"I did not write that letter! It is impossible I ever

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should have conceived, much less have written such a letter! I do not know who wrote it. I never laid my eyes on it before!"

An incredulous, insulting smile, was his reply.

"Oh! what shall I say to convince you? *Indeed, indeed* I did not do it!"

"Come, perjure yourself! Swear it."

She was silent.

"I ask you to swear it."

She was still silent.

"Come, now—will you declare upon oath that you did not write that letter?"

"God sees me! I did not!"

"That's no oath! Here's the New Testament, swear upon the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God that you didn't write it, and, perhaps, I will believe you, for well I know that many unprincipled people have a sort of fearful respect for an oath, which to them is not piety, but superstition. I think you just such a one! Come, now, swear that you did not write it!" He paused for an answer, but she looked at him in great trouble. "Will you do it?"

"Major Clifton, I cannot!"

"Now swear that you did not write it?"

"No, sir."

"Then that only confirms and seals the truth of what I knew before, that, of course, you *did* write it."

She wrung her hands in deep distress, and said—

"I cannot swear, Archer. I mean I *dare* not swear, Archer, even to prove my innocence, and get back your love."

"And why, pray?" he asked, with a mocking smile.

"Oh, Archer! my Lord and yours has commanded us to *Swear not at all.*' I dare not break that command."

"Tush, girl, you are clumsy. Do you presume to think I can be duped by that affectation of super-righteousness?"

"Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven! what shall I do?" said Catherine, in despair.

"Swear, and I will believe you," he answered, mockingly.

"Oh! *why* will not my simple word do? Oh! do you think I would tell a falsehood even to save my life?"

"Do I? Does not an astute diplomatist, like you, know that *I* know a woman who can be false, treacherous, hypocritical;—who, so young, can plot so well, and succeed so entirely;—can also tell a falsehood to conceal her baseness?" he answered, looking down upon her in insufferable scorn.

Then her whole manner changed. She arose to her feet with a certain calm and gentle dignity, and pushing back the veiling tresses from her noble brow, answered nobly—

"Yes, it is true! If I could have conceived such treachery, and written such a letter as that, I could also have lied to conceal it! There is only one on earth that knows my innocence, the writer of that letter. But one in Heaven knows it, and

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He will make it manifest. I believe in miracles, because I believe in the infinite power and goodness of God, and in the everlasting promises of the Bible."

"Well done, Maria Teresa! really that is the best of all! Indeed, your talents are quite lost upon such unworthy game as me and my poor estate—good bye!" And laughing bitterly, he left the room, and hurried down stairs. A few minutes after she heard the clock strike ten—then she arose and went to the window to look out. He stood upon the lawn, in riding gear, near a group consisting of his servant Dandy, and three saddle-horses. She saw him vault into his saddle, and ride away, attended by Dandy, mounted on one horse and leading another. As he passed the outer gate, one look of love, sorrow, and despair, he turned towards her window, and then vanished into the forest road.

She did not see that look—she could not have seen it at that distance; she saw that he was gone, and turning from the window, she sank down upon the carpet in the collapse of deepest sorrow.

Gone! He was gone! His presence that had made all suffering tolerable was withdrawn, and the place was empty—life itself was empty.

He was gone—gone—not lovingly, after a lingering, tender leave-taking—that would have been sorrowful enough; but it would have been cheered by the promise of frequent interchange of letters, and the anticipation of re-union; how much more sorrowful this utter separation!

Gone! gone! not in anger—that would have been bitter indeed; but it would have been sweetened by hope that anger would subside, that reflection would come, and reconciliation ensue; but how much bitterer this hopeless disunion.

Gone in scorn! Gone in loathing! Gone to return no more but as a stranger! Oh, insupportable grief! Oh, hopeless anguish! Oh, despair!

A few short weeks ago the heaven of her life had been so serene, so divinely serene, and her soul had reflected back the beautiful "great calm," as a still lake the clear sky.

Now all was changed! Now all was clouds and storm and darkness! A howling wilderness around! A howling tempest overhead! And her soul answered back the tempestuous discord of life, as the storm-tossed ocean, the storm-lowered sky! All was confusion, distraction, chaos!

Wild impulses—suggestions of the fiend—darted meteor-like athwart her mind:—to fly—to go away and leave a place, where she had been brought a bride, full of love and hope and trust, and where every feeling of womanly pride and delicacy had been ruthlessly, insultingly trampled in the dust!

But simultaneously with this suggestion, arose the instinct of the wife, and the inspiration of the Christian, teaching her that scorned and outraged as she had been, her only post of

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duty as of *hope*, was her husband's home. Yes, amid all the gloom and terror, she caught this one glimpse of Heaven. Amid all the clash and clang of passion and despair, she heard this voice of God.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CATHERINE'S REGENCY.

But a trouble weighed upon her,
And perplexed her night and morn,
With the burden of a station
Unto which she was not born.—TENNYSON.

SLOWLY, very slowly Catherine recovered from the shock of that bitter parting. And then she felt so lonely—so desolate; no mother—no sister—no bosom friend, to give her one comforting look of sympathy, or one sustaining word of affection. And she mourned afresh the loss of that dear, sympathizing, maternal friend, always so ready in her loving wisdom, always so ready in any trial or affliction to give counsel and comfort. And, oh! Catherine needed these—for, like the black, scudding fragments of clouds left by the tempest, dark, despairing thoughts drifted through her mind. Yes, she had need, and profoundly felt that need, of counsel and comfort in this bewildering sorrow; but of whom could she seek it? Of none—of none must she seek it. The true wife's instinct taught her that. For even when the retrospective image of his dead mother, her own beloved bosom friend, recurred in the shape of a once possible mediator between herself and husband, her mind intuitively recoiled from the idea, and she knew that were that dear mother now living, not even of her could she make a confidante—that the religious unity, the integral sanctity, the cherished exclusiveness of marriage would be invaded and broken, and the sweet charm lost by the introduction of a third party—beloved even as that dear, mutual mother—into its sacred counsels. No, unhappy and bewildered as she was, she felt that by all her hopes of a future happy union, this wretched division must be kept to herself—upon herself solely recoil the burden and the pain—she "must tread the wine press alone." And even when she prayed for Divine inspiration to guide her, the response came from the depths of her spirit, "The Word of God is within you."

And how empty the house seemed because one was away—how gloomy—how funereal—even the light footstep of a chamber-maid in the distance sounded hollowly,—sending a dreary echo through the many passages of the great, empty house—empty, for that he was gone.

It seemed not worth while to go on with daily life at all—to keep up the fire on the household hearth, or to light the evening lamp, or to order meals for herself alone.

But if Catherine were for once tempted in her sorrow to for-

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get her duties,—her duties were not the least disposed to leave her long in peace—no, not for an hour.

Catherine was roused from her fit of deep thought by the entrance of a field woman, who, with the usual curtesy, and the customary greeting of—"Sarvunt, ma'am," stood before her.

Kate raised her heavy eyelids abstractedly.

"Sarvunt, ma'am," said the woman, again curtseying "Aunt Field Mary is well over it, ma'am. It's a boy-chile, ma'am; a likely little boy-chile as ever you see, ma'am. An' Aunt Field Mary told me to tell you, ma'am, how, thank the Lord, an' she's fotch through safe, an' how she wouldn't let dem sturve you las' night, caze you wur so tired, an' caze it wur the lassest night Marse Archer had to stay home. An' Aunt Field Mary say, would you please to come down der to her quarter an' see her dis mornin', and how she wants some green tea, an' loaf sugar, an'—an'—*wine*, if you please, ma'am."

"What—what did you say?" asked Catherine, passing her hand over her forehead, to dispel the concentration of sorrowful thought.

"Aunt Field Mary, ma'am, it's a boy-chile, ma'am, a likely little boy-chile as ever you see, ma'am, an' she's fotch well through of it, thank Marster, ma'am, an' she say, how will you come an' see her, an' send her some liquor, and things. Likewise, Uncle Jubilee, its daddy, ma'am, he say, can't he have a holiday to-day, ma'am, an' stay home out'n de field, seein' how it's his firstest son an' hier out'n seven darters."

Passing her hand across her forehead slowly, Catherine dispersed the last lingering fragments of her bitter reverie, and stood up to her simple, practical, household duties. And then her action was clear and decided. She took up her little basket of keys, bade the woman follow her, and went down stairs and into the pantry, where she filled a hamper with tea and sugar, crackers, jelly, and other little matters, and gave it to her attendant, saying—

"Take these to Field Mary, and say that I will be down to see her presently."

"Yes, ma'am, sure 'nough. But 'bout de liquor, honey? likewise Uncle Jubilee's holiday, seein' how it's his firstest son an' hier out'n seven darters?"

"Tell Mary that I cannot send her wine, it is not good for her now; but tell her to mention any other want, and if it be a proper one, it shall be supplied. Tell Jubilee to return to the field—his labor cannot possibly be spared from it to-day. And stay—what is your name?"

"Nelly, ma'am. 'Deed it is, honey. That's my name, Nelly."

"I think I never saw you up at the house before, Nelly?"

"No, ma'am, likely not, chile, indeed. I lives quite distant off, down der on Cedar Creek, unnerneaf of Bushy Hill der on de outskeerts o' de plantashum."

"Well, Nelly, who is tending Field Mary?"

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"*I* is, ma'am. Hardbargain Henny, she long o' her now. But *I* tends her. I tends all de wimmin hands when dey's sick, 'deed I does, chile. But poor creeturs, dey alluz wants der miste'ss, *alluz*. I never knew dem to fail o' fretting arter *her*, dey don't seem to feel kinder safe widout her, dough I alluz tells de poor ignoran' creeturs, der mist'ess can't do nuffin 'tall—dere in de han's o' de Lord—not in de mist'ss's. An' dar Fiel' Mary, 'ceitful thing, sendin' you word how she didn't want you sturved, arter keepin' on arter us all night to send for you; but I telled her good I wan't agoin' to have the young madam wurritted long o' her 'fernal nonsense, bein' as it was de lassest night Marster had to stay at home."

"Yes, there, go now," said Catherine, waving her hand wearily.

"Nyther wan't it any sort o' use, case I, myse'f, dough I should'n be de fuss to bray affen it, am as knowin' a 'oman as if I wur book edified, bein' as I has had thirty years 'speriments, ten years practysin' on ole Marse Roger Gower plantashum, down in ole Si' Mary's, 'fore I came here, nuss long o' Miss Car'line Gower, wid her fuss baby, which was our Miss Car'line Clif'n. An' dat war twenty odd year ago, an' I'se had twenty years 'speriments here. Lord, mist'ess, ma'am, whenever you 'quires any 'vice and 'sistance, you ain't no 'cassion to call in any dem derned, infunnelly, roguing doctors as makes you worse sick, purpose o' gettin' more credit and money for makin' you well."

"There—there—there—there, Nelly, return to your patient."

"Yes, mist'ess, I'm gwine now, ma'am, only I wanted to tell you while I trought of it, how when eber you 'quire of de aid an' comfort, you no call to send offen de plantashum, case—"

"Nelly, there is one thing that I must say to you now, and which I wish you to remember. It is that when I give a direction I intend it to be followed."

The old woman looked mortified, and took up the hamper, settled it upon her head, and went out. It pained Catherine's gentle heart to speak so peremptorily. But this was one among the abuses she felt it to be her imperative duty to reform, the habits of idleness and listlessness, and the propensity to stand and gossip among the domestics. Trifling as this little incident was, it served to arouse Catherine and place her on her feet, and she did not utterly sink again.

The evening fire was kindled on the household hearth, and the evening lamp lighted, though there was but one lonely woman to feel their cheering influence.

The next day was the Sabbath, and Catherine as usual attended church. She felt deeply the need of religious consolation. Her spirit hungered, thirsted, failed and fainted for the feeding, refreshing, strengthening ministrations of the gospel. The old, sad, unanswered problem of unmerited suffering per-

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plexed her. She felt herself sinking into that sad and nearly hopeless state of mind, induced by great and singular trials to be borne perforce alone and in secret—when, wanting human sympathy and failing of divine comfort, the soul loses sight of the Merciful Father in the Omnipotent Creator, or in other words, of especial Providence in general Providence, and falls sadly, despairingly back upon its helpless self, and says that the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, the Governor of countless millions of suns and systems, never stoops to care for a poor, lost atom like itself. She needed to hear the gospel message of love and hope again. But when she entered her pew, and raised her eyes to the pulpit, she was disappointed in missing from his place the mild and venerable face and form of the parish clergyman, whose teachings every Sabbath morning sent her home with renewed love, and sustained her through the week, and she was pained to see in his stead a young man, a mere youth in seeming, some student newly ordained, she supposed, and she sank back in her seat, saddened with the thought that she would not get the greatly needed spiritual help from him; for what could a student in his youth know of life's dreadful trials? of the heart's mournful experiences, or the spirit's deep needs? She felt sure he could not help her, and she sank back, resigning herself with a deep sigh. The opening hymn was given out—

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps on the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Ye fearful souls, fresh courage take,
The cloud ye so much dread
Is big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

The first words of this hymn fell upon Catherine's surprised ear, filling her soul with awe—for it seemed a direct answer to her thought. And all that hymn, every stanza, every line, was filled with meaning for her, and powerful in its effect upon her mind, in its peculiar state of experience. She listened in penitent, grateful, reverent silence, folding her hands meekly, and saying within her heart—

"Father, forgive my doubts and fears! I will believe it! Yet, I will believe that even this heavy cloud is laden with mercy, and will shower blessings! I will believe that even this bitter trial—this bitter, bitter separation and disunion, is in some way necessary to our moral growth and future welfare, and that I shall see it! I *do* believe it, for I have had blessed answers before to doubts. 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord.' I do believe it."

God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

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were the solemn last words of the Divine Song that awed her into stillness. This hymn was sung, Catherine's beautiful voice joining the choir. And when it was ended, followed the prayer, so singularly coincident, that every word gave voice to the deep silent cry in her own suffering heart.

And then the young minister arose to give out the text: Matthew x. 29. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." And here followed the sermon. The manner of the young preacher was modest, natural, calm and sweet, as befitted the gentle words of the text, and the consoling subject of the sermon—FAITH IN PROVIDENCE—the childlike faith that comes through the heart, and not through the head. Catherine had thought he could not help her. Never had she been more in error in her life. That pale young preacher had a divine message for her—for *her;* an answer to her unsolvable problem; a message, providentially, the most direct, pointed, strong, startling that ever fell from lips touched with fire, revivifying the soul of the receiver; a message that satisfied every doubt, and calmed every fear, and replied to every question as perfectly, as satisfyingly, as if Heaven had spoken; a message that aroused faith, revived hope, rekindled love, till all the soul glowed with divine fire. She was wrapped, entranced, carried away by the eloquence, power and pathos of this divinely-inspired discourse. She never saw the young preacher before or after, but he had dropped a celestial treasure deep into where she kept it safe—a talisman through all the trials of life.

She left the church loving, hopeful, strong in faith, strong to act and endure, patient to wait. So elevated and inspired was her soul, that it illumined her whole countenance. And when the county ladies crowded around her at the church door to condole with her on the departure of Major Clifton, and to press hospitalities upon her, and to urge her not to mope in widowhood at home, their benevolent purposes were forgotten in their surprise, and the first words were—

"Why, how brightly you look this morning, Mrs. Clifton!"

Catherine promised many visits, and extended many invitations, and finally was glad to escape and enter her carriage, to dwell in lonely, loving reverence upon the words she had heard. And she reached home. And the Word departed not from her, neither that day, nor the next, nor through life. And with the perfect faith in God, perfect trust in her future came. And again she whispered to herself the charming thoughts—

"I will wait patiently—I will work faithfully. The post of duty, as of hope, is my husband's house and home. He trusts me, at least, even now, with the charge of this great plantation. Construe it as he may, it is a mark of great confidence. I will be true to the trust."

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And then, indeed, as she whispered these words to her heart, hope, sweet hope, inspired her more and more, and strengthened her more and more, and she felt that he still loved her—she felt it by that sure instinct that teaches a woman when she is beloved, though no word, look, or gesture reveals it to her. And she acted upon this feeling, although almost unconscious of its existence as a *motive*. And she knew that she would be useful to him, substantially useful to him where she was—for with her it was not enough to be devoted, soul and body, to his interests,—no, "wishing well" *must* have a "body in it," in order "to be felt." She communed with her heart, asking—

"What, besides the service of God, do I really live for in this world? For his happiness. Yes, my profound heart, that is it! For his good, his interests, his welfare. I have not been an obstacle to his happiness. I have not been a stumbling block in the way of his marrying another. No! for I feel that he loves me as he never loved another; and I love him as he was never loved by another; and has any other the instinct, the inspiration, the strength and patience to bear with him, that God has placed in my heart? I will believe and trust in the Lord and His inspirations. And heart, and brain, and hands,—all that I am, and all that I have, will I devote to his service. And until he restores me, that alone shall make my occupation and my happiness."

The next morning being Monday, she arose with the intention of taking seriously in hand the business of the estate. This was now the first of December, and there was a great deal to be done before the close of the year, in financial, as well as in domestic and agricultural matters. The overseer and the hired farm-laborers had all been paid in advance, up to the first of January. And Major Clifton had left Catherine twelve hundred dollars in cash, for her own current expenses. All this money she had at once determined to devote to another purpose—namely—to lifting some of those notes which would fall due on the first of the year. She determined, also, in order to help to clear off the incubus of debt for the coming year, to try to find a tenant for Hardbargain, and to devote the rent to the taking up of the remaining notes. She went into a patient and thorough examination of the overseer's accounts, and discovered, with much pain, that he had embezzled the funds trusted to him for the payment of the hired hands; and a stricter review of his conduct, resulted in the detection of other malpractices, that decided Catherine to give him warning. A very little observation convinced her, also, that the "baker's dozen of hired laborers, all his own kinsfolks," were an unnecessary and expensive set of idle parasites, of whom she determined to rid the plantation at the end of the year. She finally concluded still further to lower the scale of expenditures, by parting with her housekeeper. She reconciled her to this last step, when she heard of a place

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in the neighborhood to which Mrs. Mercer might go. Yet Catherine did not wish to make these important changes without again consulting Major Clifton. And, perhaps—let the whole truth be told—perhaps poor Kate was desirous to hear from him, and glad of a fair business excuse to write. And she wrote the following note. She had some trouble with it. It was the first (except the lines at the funeral,) she had ever written him, and, under all the circumstances, she hesitated how to begin, or how to end it. She disliked to address him as a mere acquaintance, and she shrunk from any warmer manner of greeting. Finally, she wrote, as she would have written to a friend—thus—

"WHITE CLIFFS, December 8th, 1812.

"DEAR MAJOR CLIFTON:—

"After a very careful investigation of the affairs of the plantation, and much patient thought concerning them, I have concluded—if I have your approbation and authority for doing so—that the establishment can be cut down so as to reduce the annual expenditure to about one-half its present amount—also, that the Hardbargain farm can be let for a sum, double the annual amount of what we can save at White Cliffs. And, finally, that the aggregate of these moneys, saved and acquired, will be sufficient, in two years, to pay off the accumulated debts oppressing the estate. (Here followed a more detailed account of her plans.) Please write, and let me know if I have your authority for proceeding.

Yours, faithfully,

"CATHERINE."

In due time, Catherine received the answer. She seized it with an eager hand. She opened it with trembling fingers. She most unreasonably hoped—poor girl—for some kind, relenting word—some token of approbation or affection. Truly, she believed in miracles. This was the precious epistle—

"HAMPTON, December 16th, 1812.

"MADAM:—

"Your favor of the 8th instant lies before me. I beg leave to reiterate now what I said at parting—viz: that I have not the slightest hesitation in leaving the plantation to your own exclusive charge and direction—having no doubt that self-interest will guide your talent into the surest means of recruiting the resources of the estate. Let Hardbargain, by all means, if it pleases you to do it, remembering that I have nothing to do with that cunningly acquired little piece of property of yours. Regarding the dismissal of the house-keeper, the overseer, and the hired farm-laborers, whom you consider as supernumeraries, send them off, by all means, if you think it proper to do so. I, myself, perhaps, should have hesitated, ere I sent them adrift upon the world. But money-saving is, I presume, a plebeian instinct.

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"Finally, pray govern in your own way, without ever again thinking it to be necessary to consult,

"Your servant,

"ARCHER CLIFTON."

CHAPTER XXXV.

CATHERINE'S PROGRESS.

And she grew a noble lady,
And her people loved her much.—TENNYSON.

CATHERINE'S arrangements for the year were all completed by the first of January; and with less inconvenience to others, and consequently with less pain to herself, than she had dared to anticipate.

She heard that Turnbull, the cashiered overseer, had purchased a piece of land in the valley—(doubtless with the embezzled funds, but of that she did not think)—built upon it a log cabin, and set up as a farmer upon his own footing; and that he had taken his tribe of sons and nephews to assist him. She was very much pleased to know that they were out of the way of swindling others as they had swindled Clifton, and also that they were equally removed from want and suffering.

Mrs. Mercer, by her warm recommendation, had found a very eligible situation as housekeeper to an elderly, single gentleman—a planter in the neighborhood—and her benevolence was set at rest in regard to the old woman.

Lastly, she had let Hardbargain to excellent tenants—a young New Englander and his wife—who took it ready furnished and stocked as it was; and designed to work the land and keep a school.

The negroes had their usual carnival at Christmas, lasting till after New Year—during which, all that had been engaged in the last twelve months were married, and wedding parties were given and dances got up, ect., ect.

But on the second of January, Catherine caused them all to be assembled in her presence, and told them that she should, on the next Monday and thereafter, set them to work in earnest; that their overseer was gone—("Thank Marster Lord for that," exclaimed several)—but that she herself would be their overseer for the ensuing year. ("You'll be fair, young mistress! We ain't afeared o' you," said the same.) She waved her hand for silence and attention, and then informed them farther—that though they should find her hereafter as heretofore, just and moderate and merciful; ready to give ear to complaints, and settle difficulties, and reward their zeal—yet that she should certainly require a more steady and systematic application to their duties than they had ever before given. She said, in conclusion, that their health, comfort, improvement and happiness, should be her care; but that

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even in this also, she should need their co-operation—("You shall hab it, mist'ess, 'deed you shall, honey;" from some of the older negroes.) Finally she dismissed them, telling them that she wished to see them together again on Sunday evening at early candle-light, in the spinning-room, where she desired that they should assemble quietly.

On Saturday evening when the women were done spinning, Catherine directed that all the wheels should be taken to one corner of the room, and crowded together, and that the settees and benches from the piazza and lawn, should be brought in and arranged around the walls; and finally that a little reading stand and chair should be brought for her own use. These preparations occupied but ten minutes, and the room was fitted up for family worship.

On Sunday evening, at the appointed hour, Catherine met her assembled laborers and servants there. When they were all seated and perfectly still and attentive, she said to them—"I desired your presence here this Sabbath evening, that I might make a proposition to you. I have been thinking that we ought not to finish every day without remembering and returning thanks to our Heavenly Father for His daily bounties, protection and mercies to us, and asking a continuance of the same blessings; and I think we should not dare to lie down and commit ourselves to that helpless sleep that so resembles death, without confessing to our Lord the sins we have committed against Him during the day, imploring His forgiveness of them, and asking His watchful care over us during the darkness of the night and the defencelessness of sleep. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, yes, mist'ess, we do, we do indeed," answered several of the elder negroes, clearly—while a modest murmur of assent ran through the assembly. The negroes are strongly inclined to worship, and ever ready to co-operate in anything of that sacred character.

Catherine resumed—

"We should each do this in private by our own bedsides, but we should also do it together as a household—as the creatures of one God, the children of one Father." She paused a moment in thought, and then spoke again. "I have been also reflecting that you ought all to know more of the Bible than you have as yet had any opportunity of knowing. And I think that most of you would be pleased to know more." She paused for an answer.

"Yes, yes, mist'ess, we do," chimed in many eager voices, old and young.

"I know you do. Well, then, henceforth we will assemble in this room every evening just before bed time, and as a household of the Lord, a family of one Father, spend a short time together in reading and hearing the Holy Scriptures, and in prayer. In beginning to read the Bible with you, I shall commence with the first chapter of the New Testament, and

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read a chapter every night, until we regularly read it through. And afterwards, in the same manner, we will go through David's Psalms and the Prophets.

Catherine finished and sat down, made a sign for silence, and opened the New Testament and commenced her reading. Never had reader a more attentive or interested audience. She passed over the long, hard genealogical table in the first part of the chapter, and began with the Angel's visit to the Virgin Mary, and read also the second chapter, describing the birth and infancy of the Saviour, sometimes stopping to give explanations, which she knew the simplicity of her audience made necessary. The family service was concluded with a prayer, and the servants dismissed.

And this evening service became thenceforth a daily practice. And Catherine's people learned more of the life and doctrines of the Saviour from her, than they would have acquired in a lifetime's attendance upon learned ministers, who preach only for the educated.

On Monday morning, Catherine entered upon her assumed duty of overseer. And never were the affairs of a plantation better administered than by her. Her "good will was to it," and all her faculties brought to bear upon the business. And although she kept a firm hold upon the reins of government, exacted the complete fulfilment of every duty, and kept constantly at their post every man and woman, yet never was a mistress more beloved and venerated. And certainly never was one so faithfully served. All subordinates need—not harsh nor lax government—but a steady, systematic, rational government, which they can understand and be satisfied with, and such an one was that of Catherine. Her administration was for her people a very wholesome change from the capricious tyranny of the late overseer, who had been accustomed to permit the utmost license and laxity among the laborers for four or five days, and then, growing alarmed, to hurry and worry, and drive and maltreat them for a week, to make up for lost time. Catherine's government was regular, firm, just and merciful. And she was loved, respected and served accordingly. There were some exceptions, but they were very few and unimportant, and soon fell under the general rule.

And thus, in the perfect performance of every duty, domestic and social, that devolved upon her as wife, friend, mistress, and Christian. Catherine passed the winter. The spring brought the usual accession of busy work, and she gave herself up to its direction with untiring energy and activity. She prayed and labored, and trusted in Heaven, and Heaven prospered her work, and all went well. Before the first of June, she had paid off all those heavy notes, which had been accumulating interest so long. There were other heavy debts, but she saw her way clearly through, discharging them before the end of the current year.

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But she never, never heard from Major Clifton. He seemed just as lost to her as if the grave had received him. She took all the principal newspapers, for the sake of keeping the run of the campaign; and oh! often her cheeks and very lips paled, and her heart sickened and sunk with terror, to read of the awful perils of war, and to think that he was exposed to them. But terror was not the only emotion raised by these descriptions of engagements. No—her whole soul glowed with patriotic ardor, when she read of the gallant repulse of the combined land and naval forces of the British, under Admirals Warren and Cockburn, and General Sir Sidney Beckwith, from Craney Island, by a mere handful of our troops; and her heart swelled with love and enthusiasm, when in the same account, she saw her husband's name mentioned with the highest encomiums upon his bravery, discretion, and invaluable services.

Autumn came, bringing along with its other associations intensely distinct images of the last sweet, calm days she had passed at Hardbargain with her dying mother, and these vivid recollections stimulated afresh her devotion and her energy. During her administration, to clear the estate of debt, and at its close, to restore it unencumbered into the hands of her husband, was now her dear object. When the harvest was gathered in, she consulted several of her most intelligent and enterprising neighbors, concerning the state of the agricultural markets, and afterwards proceeded to Baltimore in person in order to obtain the best possible prices for her crops. She succeeded in effecting highly advantageous sales, and with the proceeds she returned home and paid off several of those heavy debts.

And so the autumn passed, and winter came, with its leisure, its stormy days, and its long nights. Nothing occurred to break the monotony of daily life until the last of December, when she collected the half year's rent from Hardbargain, and paid off all the remaining debts, except one inconsiderable note of six hundred dollars. On the morning of the first of January, she sent as usual to the village post-office for her papers. When the boy returned, he handed her a letter directed in the hand-writing of Major Clifton. Oh! joy at last!—she tore open the envelope, and seized the enclosure—it was nothing but a check upon the Bank of Richmond for five hundred dollars. She let it fall unheeded, covered her face with her hands, and wept silently. But when her fit of silent weeping was over, she arose, took the check, went and collected what money she had left in the house, and ordered her carriage and drove to L———, and lifted that last note. Then Catherine had the joy of seeing the property entirely free from debt.

And so passed the winter and came the spring of 1814. And still she heard nothing from Major Clifton. And since reading the account of his gallant conduct on Craney Island, she

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learned nothing of him. And still from her loop-hole of retreat, she anxiously watched the progress of the war, seizing upon all the published accounts, and reading them with the greatest avidity. How diligently she searched the papers to find his name, and how eagerly her eyes darted down upon any officer's name beginning with a C, which always turned out to be Crutchfield, Corbin, Carey, anything but Clifton! Oh, how barren was all this war news, after all!

But Admiral Cockburn's piratical fleet was now in the Chesapeake, spreading devastation and terror through all its islands, coasts, and tributary rivers; and every paper was filled with accounts of his marauding incursions and savage atrocities, that defied just description, much more exaggeration. Hear what a cotemporary historian says of him:

"Throughout the waters and shores of the Chesapeake, Admiral Cockburn now reigned supreme, ubiquitous and irresistible. The burglaries, larcenies, incendiarisms, and mere marauding, perpetrated by Admiral Cockburn, were as odious and ignoble, though less bloody and horrible, than the inhuman atrocities of the British savages in the West. Slaves in large numbers, large quantities of tobacco, furniture, and other private property, protected by the laws of war, and seldom taken, even if destroyed by land troops, were seized upon by the sea-faring warriors with piratical rapacity. The predatory attacks of the enemy in the Chesapeake were limited to isolated villages, poor farm-houses, and other indefencible objects taken or destroyed. Destruction was the punishment proclaimed and executed for resistance. The house and barn were burned of whoever fired a shot, or drew a sword in self-defence. Many respectable persons in comfortable circumstances were reduced to poverty by these depredations. The poor were especial sufferers. With shores so indented with creeks and bays, the whole force of a State under arms would have been unequal to cope with such overwhelming aggressors."

Reading frequently such accounts as this, and even more alarming ones than this, is it strange that Catherine sickened with terror and anxiety for the safety of him who was exposed to all the horrors of this unsparing warfare.

At length the shock came. It was on the evening of the day after harvest home, and she had given all her people a holiday, even down to the messenger whose daily duty it was to bring her papers from the post office, telling him that he might take the whole day, and bring her the mail when he returned home at night. Thus, instead of receiving her papers, as usual, in the morning, Catherine had to wait until the boy's return in the evening. She was sitting in the spinning-room, awaiting the assembling of her servants, whom she had just summoned to evening worship, when they all entered, and with them the post-boy, who came up and laid before her the single paper that had come that day. She took it, to

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lay aside until after the evening's devotions were over—but a magic name on the outside arrested her attentions. She caught up the paper, and read in large capitals:

"ENGAGEMENT AT ST. LEONARD'S. *British forces under Admiral Cockburn repulsed with considerable loss. Major Clifton dangerously wounded.*"

She read no farther—the room swam around her—she reeled, and fell into the arms of Henny, who sprang forwards to receive her. Her people crowded around her in great anxiety. But only one moment she fainted thus—then she recovered, controlled herself, resumed her seat, and after sending the servants all back to their places, by a wave of her hand, opened the Bible, and commenced the evening's exercises. Her face was very pale, her hands quivered in turning the leaves, and her voice faltered, so as to be nearly inaudible, but she persevered, and got through with the service, even unto the benediction. After it was over, she detained them a moment, by a gesture, and then said—

"Your master has been dangerously wounded."

Murmurs of surprise, grief and anxiety agitated the assembly, and testified to their affectionate concern.

"Go now quietly to your homes, and to-morrow perhaps I may be able to tell you more."

They dispersed slowly, turning glances of uneasiness and distress at the silent anguish of her countenance.

She too, went out. How she spent the night is best known to Heaven. In the morning when she appeared among her household—the wasted cheeks, the sunken eyes, the hollow temples, and the written agony of the brow, alone proved the consuming sorrow of her heart.

"Jack—I want Jack," she said, as soon as she reached her parlor. And the favorite servant appeared before her. "Jack, I think you love me," she said.

"Try me, mist'ess dear, an' see ef I doesn't."

"And I think you love your master?"

"Ah! my Lor'! Try me—jes on'y try me, mist'ess—dat's all."

"I wish you to go to him from me."

"Oh! do—do—do—*do* sen' me, mist'ess! It's war I longs for to be."

"I shall. The distance is over a hundred miles. You must pick the best horse in the stable, and start within an hour, and ride day and night until you reach your destination."

"'Deed mist'ess, I won't let de grass grow onnerneaf of my feet."

"Very well, then, go now—have you had your breakfast?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Go now, then, and prepare for your journey, while I write

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you a pass. And when you are quite ready, come to me, and I will give you farther directions about your journey."

Jack hastened out—and his mistress remained for a few minutes, with her hands pressed to her heart, repeating to herself, with agonizing earnestness—

"Would—oh!—would to Heaven, I too, might go." Soon she started, as with sudden recollection, and hurried off to write the pass, and the directions about the road. And when in less than half an hour Jack appeared before her again, she was ready for him. "Here," she said, "is your pass, and written directions, lest you should forget what I tell you."

"Nebber fear me forgettin', mist'ess, dear."

"You must take the road to Alexandria, which is seventy miles from here. When you reach that town, take the ferry-boat and cross the Potomac to the Maryland side. Then inquire your road to the village of Benedict, on the Patuxent, which is thirty or forty miles further down the country. When you reach the village, ask the way to St. Leonard's. Arrived at your journey's end, find Colonel Wadsworth, or Major Stuart, or Captain Miller, show your pass and tell your errand, and they will direct you where to find your master. Do you understand?"

"Yes, mist'ess."

"All this that I have told you is written down here on this piece of parchment; take care of it, lest you should forget, and lose your way."

"Yes, ma'am, I'll be berry cautiencious."

"And now listen to me, Jack;" her voice broke down, some emotion seemed struggling in her bosom for expression—she quelled it and went on—"When you find your master, write to me at once; thank Heaven I taught you to write! write then to me at once, and tell me how he is. Will you promise me that?"

"Faithful, mist'ess—faithful."

"And, Jack, when you have once found him, *be faithful unto death* to him. Never leave him. Nurse him, wait on him, watch over him day and night—*do so*, if you love him, Jack;" again the inward struggle choked her voice, and when she resumed, it was with broken and faltering accents; "and, Jack, attend—take this note—and *when his fever is off*—mind you, *when he is calm*—give it to him."

"Yes, mist'ess, dear."

"That is all I have to say to you. Now nasten. Good-bye; and may Heaven bless and speed you."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE NIGHT JOURNEY.

The heart once broken by the loved,
Is strong to meet the foeman,—MRS. BROWNING.

NEARLY a fortnight of extreme anxiety passed away, during which Catherine heard nothing from her messenger. On the

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evening of the thirteenth day of his departure, however, a letter was brought to her, directed in the well-known, but alas! not very familiar hand-writing of Major Clifton. Oh, joy! He was living then, and even well enough to write. With a fervent ejaculation of deep gratitude to Heaven, she broke the seal. But her face paled as she read—

"ON BOARD THE BRITISH SHIP ALBION,
"August 21st, 1814.

"CATHERINE:—

"Are you then destined to be for ever fatal, not only to me, but to every human creature that is faithful to me? See what your reckless disregard of others' lives has done!—doomed a poor, fond, faithful creature to a felon's death! Attend, woman! to what I am about to write. I was not dangerously wounded, as the newspapers reported, but slightly hurt, and taken prisoner, and conveyed on board this, the Admiral's ship—as they did not report. Thus, the poor fellow, whom you sent on this death's errand, not finding me in the American camp, and hearing that I was a prisoner on board the British fleet, true to your command, to find and communicate with me, and reckless of his own danger, procured a boat at Benedict, and came out alongside this ship. You know the result, as well as I can inform you. The wretched boy was taken and put in irons as a spy, and has been doomed to be hanged at the yard-arm. He only waits the Admiral's orders for execution. My own inconvenience is nothing beside his cruel fate—yet, nevertheless, I may as well inform you that I, who was upon parole, when your messenger sought to communicate with me, have also to thank your interference for being put under arrest, and nothing but the relaxation of strict discipline, incident upon the departure of the two commanders, and a mere fortuity, affords me the opportunity of writing, and sending this note. Admiral Cockburn and General Ross are now on their march to Washington City. And my object in writing to you is merely this: to assure you by all my hopes of salvation, that unless you, in your unequalled machiavelism, find some way of saving this boy from death, I will never see, or speak to you again.

"ARCHER CLIFTON."

Still clasping the letter, her hand and head fell with a gesture of utter despair.

"Why, what's de matter, Miss Kate, honey? no bad news, I trus'," said Henny.

A deep, heart-breaking sob only answered her.

"My goodness, Miss Kate, deary, what is it den? is marster dead? Oh, deary me, Miss Kate, chile, don't keep on looking dat a way—'deed, you puts a scare on to me!—don't! 'Sider how it's de Lord's will, honey, an' let de tears come, let de tears come, chile! *Do,* honey. 'Deed, troubles like de measles; ef it don't break out, it strikes in an' kills you dead—"

A gasp from Catherine, and a gesture imploring silence

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while she spanned her temples with both hands, and tried to think clearly.

"My gracious, Miss Kate, don't look so ghastly, honey—don't. *Is* marster dead, sure enough?"

"He's not dead, he's not dead," said Catherine, huskily, while she waved her hand for peace.

"Well, den, honey, long as der's life der's hope, an' no 'casion for 'spair. Is he berry bad, honey?"

"He's well—well," said Catherine, in the same tone.

"Well, den, long as he's well, what 'casion you take on so, honey——Oh! my Lor'—taint—taint poor brother Jack as anything's happened to?"

"Oh, Henny! Your master and Jack have both been taken prisoners by Admiral Cockburn!"

"Oh, Miss Kate! Oh, my Lor', Miss Kate! An' dey do tell me how he eats his prisoners 'live," exclaimed Henny, falling down into a chair, flinging her check apron over her head, and beginning to cry.

Almost heedless of her handmaid's violent demonstrations of grief and terror, Catherine walked up and down the floor, with her hands clasped around her temples, in the very agony of thought. To save the boy from death—*how* was she, at that remote distance, to save him? Oh! it seemed a mockery, a snare, to put forgiveness upon such an impracticable condition! Yet she thought him no setter of snares. She thought over the whole of the letter, searching for a *hint;* she needed not to look at it again—every line and word was burned in upon her brain and heart—she thought over the whole of it, earnestly searching for a clue to action—she found it at length in the phrases, "He only waits the Admiral's order for execution," and "Admiral Cockburn and General Ross are now on their march to Washington City." She thought if she could see the Admiral, she might yet save his life—of so little worth as a sacrifice to the enemy, but of such inestimable value to her. The date of the letter was the twenty-first—this day was the twenty-third. "Oh! he is probably executed by this time," said Despondency. "But possibly not," said Hope. She tried to think clearly, to separate the dreadful chaos of thought and passion, and to weigh and adjust circumstances, so as she might decide and act promptly. Admiral Cockburn and General Ross must be near Washington, if they had not already reached the city. Washington was two full day's journey from her home, but every hour was precious, for life and death might hang upon it. She could perform the journey in a day and night. Her resolution was taken. Going up to where Henny sat crying and rocking herself backward and forward, she said—

"Rise, Henny, and go and tell James to saddle my horse, *my rough coated pony,* Henny, he is the strongest and the fleetest, and bring him around to the door."

"Oh, Miss Kate! does you think he'll eat 'em sure 'nough?"

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"What do you mean, Henny—are you crazy?"

"Admirable Cockbu'n, honey. Does you think he'll eat Marse Archy an' brother Jack, sure 'nough? I hopes not, 'cause you see, chile, brother Jack, he's so poor an' lean, an' Marse Archer, he mus' be tough an' stringy 'nough, too long o' all dis yer warfarin', but Lor', 'haps he'll think der good 'nough for sojer's rations, and give 'em to dem."

"Henny that is all a notion."

"'Bout der eaten 'em, honey?"

"Yes, yes—*don't* stop me now, Henny! hasten! hasten! quick! quick, Henny! Have my pony caught, and then hurry back to me."

"But, Miss Kate, are you sure?"

"Yes, yes, I'm sure. Oh! hurry, hurry!"

The woman went out, and Catherine sat down and penned a hasty note to her neighbor, the down-east tenant of Hardbargain, requesting him to give a slight supervision of affairs at White Cliffs during her absence for a few days. By the time she had sealed and directed it, Henny re-appeared.

"Go fetch my riding-dress, Henny," was her next prompt command.

"My goodness, Miss Kate, where—"

"Go, Henny, at once, and don't stay to question me."

The maid obeyed, and her mistress rang the bell, and gave the note she had written to a boy, to carry to Hardbargain.

As he left the room, Henny entered it with the riding-habit.

"Help me on with it at once, Henny," said Catherine, meeting her.

"My goodness, Miss Kate! you to be goin' out this time o' night, an' we-dem in so much trouble. You didn' ax me to tell nobody who wur to wait on you; but Jeemes, he's gettin' ready."

"No, no, I don't want anybody."

"Dear me, mist'ess, honey, where's you gwine?"

"Didn't I tell you? To Washington City."

"To Washington?" exclaimed Henny, letting the dress fall from her hands, and looking up in stupor.

"Yes, yes, didn't I tell you—to Washington, to see Admiral Cockburn, and save your brother. I do not believe of Cockburn—I never believe of any one—as ill as is reported of them, and I think if I go and make a proper representation to him, I shall be able to save Jack."

Henny stood gazing at her mistress in the same stupor.

"Come, come, Henny! give me the other sleeve around here," said Catherine, impatiently.

Still Henny stood and stared in a stupor, until suddenly all her muscles and limbs gave way, and she sank down before her mistress, embraced her knees, looked up into her face, and said, in tones of earnest, deep affection—

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"*Don't* go, mist'ess, *don't* go—don't trust yerse'f long o' Admirable Cockburn an' his hang-gallows sojers. Don't."

"I must, Henny."

"*Oh! no, no.* Memorize what happened at Raison River, an' at Ham'ton, how dey nyder spared sexes nor ages—nyder ole paralytic men nor little babies, nor der young moders—dem leastes' ob all. Don't mist'ess, dear."

"I *must*, Henny. It is the only chance of saving your brother."

"Oh, dear me! Oh, my heart's ready for to break; but nebber mind—don't go, mist'ess, don't go. Let him die, mist'ess, tain't nothin' only *but* death arter all! an' Admirable Cockburn, 'save his funelly soul, can't do nuffin' 'tall *but* kill him. An', poor fellow, he hadn't long to live no how, wid a 'sumption in his breas', an' so it on'y comes a little sooner an' a little deffunt like. Don't go, Miss Kate, dear, let him die. I'se his sister, an' I'se been a mammy to him, but I sez so, an' *he'd* say so, too, brother Jack would, ef he could on'y speak long' you! Sure he'd lay down his life willin', an' so would us all, sooner 'an you should fall in wid Admirable Cockburn."

"I know it, Henny! I know it! Don't talk to me any longer, though every word you say but fixes my resolution to go."

"Oh, Miss Kate! oh! *don't, don't,*" exclaimed Henny, clasping her knees, and repeating all the arguments and entreaties she had used before. But Catherine was firm as sad.

"If you *mus'* make an effort, sen' a messenger long of a note, Miss Kate. Dar! do dat—now dat's a good trought."

"Ah, Heaven forbid! I have had enough of risking poor ignorant creatures, who cannot keep themselves out of danger."

"Well, den, Miss Kate, *who* is you gwine for to take long o' you, to wait on you, chile?"

"There, give me my hat, Henny."

"Yes, honey, *who's* you gwine to take wid you?"

"I told you no one, Henny—where are my gloves?"

"Here dey is, honey. Oh, mist'ess, dat's susanside, an' nothin' 'tall else. Take Jeemes 'long o' you! He's brave as a lion—comes to 'fendin' at *you.*"

"No, James would need rest and food on the journey—I shall require—I shall stop for neither. Besides there is not a horse here who could bear his weight continuously for so long a journey. My strong little mountain pony, I think, may carry my light weight to the journey's end with very little stopping."

"Oh, Miss Kate! 'deed I shall pray for you."

"Yes, do, Henny—that is the only way in which you can help me. Come, go with me out."

"Stay, mist'ess, stay one minute! I'se trought ob anoder trought."

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"Well?"

"Long as you will go onattended, please don't be 'noyed at what I'm gwine to say."

"Only be quick, Henny, that is all."

"Well, den, 'long as you will go widout any 'fence or 'tection—"

"Except the Lord, Henny."

"Yes, honey, sure 'nough—'cept de Lord's—hadn't you better put on—hem—a-hem—male boy's clothes?"

"*What?*"

"Wouldn't it be more of a 'tection to you? Now, der's a suit in de house, you calls to min', as 'ill jus' fit you. Dem as 'longed to Miss Georgy, when she were a masquerade-play-actorin' here wid de city folks, here one Christmas. Dey'd fit you to a tee."

"No, thank you, Henny!"

"You ain't mad 'long o' me for sayin' of it, is you, Miss Kate?"

"Mad? Poor girl! No, Henny!"

"Nor likewise 'noyed in yer feelin's?"

"No, no, you did but mistake," answered Catherine, getting into her saddle, while James held the pony, and Henny affectionately arranged the riding skirt around her feet and handed her the whip.

"There, there, that will do; good-bye, all of you," said Catherine, feverishly.

Henny burst into loud wailing. Catherine paused and laid her hand upon her shoulder, silencing her, while she said—

"My poor girl, do not fear. I have committed myself to the Lord! I am in His hands. I trust in Him, else I should not dare do this which seems to you so much like madness. I trust in Him, and no evil can befall me."

"But oh! mist'ess, mist'ess! If you should arter all perish!"

"If I perish, I perish!—it will be no evil if the Lord permits it!"

"I doesn't b'lieve de Lord am gwine fur to 'mit it! I feels safe 'bout young mist'ess, *I* does! I b'lieves how ef Admirable Cockburn or any of his jail-birds was to come fur to sturve Mist'ess, trustin' in Hebben as she does, how a thunderbolt would strike him down sooner, an' she as puts her trus' in de Lord, should come to any harm."

"Yes, or a yethquake, if ne'ssary!" exclaimed the more ardent Henny. "I ain't 'feard for you no longer, mist'ess, dear! Hebben is wid you!"

Catherine waved her hand in adieu, gave reins to her pony which bounded beneath her, and seemed to fly over the lawn. She was fevered, excited—"mad inspired," say either. Night was closing darkly around her, but its sedative shadows had no power to soothe her excited nerves—the dews were falling, but they had no efficacy to cool her fevered veins; along

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journey lay before her, but its length could not discourage her; dangers were thickly strown about her path, but they could not appall her; her only desire, her only anxiety, was to reach her destination in season, if possible, to rescue this boy from death, because he was dear to Clifton—dearer than she herself, his wife, was, she now thought; and now her life itself seemed of little worth, since the hope that was life's earthly end, was laid low. Her only remaining hope was to save this life—her only remaining fear, to fail in doing so.

Her path, for many miles, lay through the deep, interminable wilderness of forest, that, rising and falling with the low mountain ranges, extended over more than half the country. Her path was so narrow, and the branches of the trees often so low and interlaced, that a single start of her horse, or a single moment's hesitation to bow her head, might have dashed her brains out against the intersecting branches of the trees. And in the deep darkness of the night, and in the despairing absence of her perceptive faculties, this danger beset her every instant. But she rode on, like a monomaniac, strangely heedless, and, like a somnambulist, strangely preserved. As night deepened, and lowered, and thickened around her in the awful depths of the wilderness, the distant howl of the hungry wolf, the nearer cry of the fierce wild cat, and once the more fearful whistle-signal of some outlawed desperado fell upon her ear. But even these appalling sounds struck no terror to a heart, stunned by despair into insensibility to danger. And she rode on through these terrific perils, strangely unconscious, and strangely protected.

At length, as she descended the last steep, and drew near to the outskirts of the wilderness, the lights of the small village of L——— gleamed through the interstices of the woods—appearing and disappearing, jack-o'-lantern-like, until she emerged from the forest and came full upon the hamlet. It was so late at night, that all the houses were shut and dark, and the only lights were those she had seen in the forest,—the lights of the stage and post office. She passed like a meteor through the gloomy street, eliciting only a "What the deuce was that?" from a loiterer in the stage office, who had seen her flight, and emerged again upon an open plain, over which her road lay for many miles. Another village gleamed up from the plains—was reached, passed, and left far behind with the same lightning-like speed.

She rode all night, less sensible to danger and fatigue than the hardy little mountain pony that was carrying her light weight, but straining every nerve and sinew in the service. The night was deeply dark—the clouds thick, heavy and lowering; she had no means of computing time or distance, but farm, forests and fields continued to loom, appear and vanish, as she fled past them. She watched the East with feverish anxiety for day. But still mountain, meadow, and moorland

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came and went, as she approached and hurried by them, and still deep darkness hung like a pall over Heaven and earth. Vainly she watched the East, for hamlet, village or town in turn was seen and reached and left behind, and still a wall of dense blackness blocked up the Orient.

A new and very serious danger threatened her every instant—her poor horse, fatigued nearly to death, was ready to fall, and she did not know it. He reeled and tottered, and stumbled and recovered himself many times, and she did not see or feel it! nay, she mechanically exerted every nerve and sinew to hold him up, and keep him on his feet, while totally unconscious of her own exertion. Like a sleep walker was she in her deep abstraction.

She was in a deep forest again riding for life, and the veins in her arms were swelled out like cords, with straining to hold the horse up on his feet. She could no longer see the Eastern horizon, but it was growing lighter, and she knew that morning was dawning. She rode on, and on, and on, and at length came out of the forest in time to see the level rays of the rising sun striking redly across the fields. The windows of a farm-house flashing back the early light gleamed upon her vision, and at the same time her horse reeled and fell with her. "Good Lord!" "Are you hurt?" "Run here, Tim." "Call your mist'ess, Peter." "Where are you hurt, lady? can you tell?"

Catherine awoke as out of a dream, to see many people around her all asking questions, and all attempting to extricate her from her saddle. She passed her hand across her brow, as was her wont when trying to dispel thought, and she looked at them in perplexity.

"My Lord, I'm afraid she's very much hurt! Can you speak, lady? Where is your injury?" said the eldest man of the party, at length, lifting her in his arms.

"I—no—I'm not hurt—not the least; is the horse?"

"We don't know, ma'am; I'm sure it's a blessed thing you're not killed yourself," said another of the group, who with several more, were trying to raise the pony upon his legs.

"Pray put me down upon my feet. Thank you. I'm not hurt. How far is Washington City from this place?" said Catherine, as she stood watching her horse.

"Good forty miles, lady. I don't think he's hurt, but poor fellow, he's trembling with fatigue," said the farmer, answering her, and then examining the horse, which was raised at last and stood trembling and blowing.

"Can he take me to Washington to-day?" asked Catherine, as she leaned against the fence for support.

"*He?*—Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Why look at him, lady: Besides, can you go there yourself anyhow? Why you're ready to drop now! Better go in and let the old woman put you to bed and give you some breakfast."

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"It is true I'm very stiff and weary—having ridden all night. But I must reach Washington without delay, there is one I care about under sentence of death. If I reach there in time, I may get a reprieve and save him. I *must* go to-day." Catherine spoke this, frequently pausing for breath. When she ceased—

"Some of her 'lations gwine to be hung, an' she gwine to see President Madison to get him off! May depen', that's it!" whispered one farm laborer to another.

"Can you let me have a horse to take me there to-day? I will pay twice—ten times his value," said Catherine, raising her heavy eyelids to the old farmer's kind face.

"Lady, I'll let you have another horse in two hours from this, on condition that you go in to my old woman and take some refreshment, and lie down to rest for that time. And not a minute sooner, and not on any other terms whatsoever, even, it it was your father was going to be hanged—would I let you have a horse; because I see very clearly that, unless you take some rest, you will drop down dead before you get a mile farther on the road."

"It is true—it is the voice of Providence, I think—I thank you very much; I will rest. Please take care of my poor pony."

"He shall be looked after, lady. Take my arm." And the worthy farmer drew Catherine's arm within his own, and carefully and respectfully supported her to the house, where he gave her into the charge of his wife, saying, "Here, wait upon this lady, honey! be a mother to her, honey! for she's sorrowfully in want of one."

The farmer's wife placed her in a stuffed chair, drew off her gloves, untied her hat and removed it, unfastened her spencer, and asked her if she would have breakfast, which was just ready to go on the table.

"No, thank you. You are very kind. The Lord reward you. But—rest, I want only rest," said Catherine, ready to swoon, for the sense of fatigue was growing upon her.

"Yes, *rest*, that's all she wants, or rather that's the most she wants now! Put her to bed! let her sleep for two hours, and have a cup of strong coffee and a broiled chicken ready for her when she wakes. That will set her up again, and help her to reach her journey's end," said the kind-hearted man.

Supported by the farmer's wife, Catherine was guided up the stairs to a cool and quiet room, where she dropped upon the bed. No sooner had her head touched the pillow, than the room, the white-washed wall, blue window-curtains, the evergreens on the whitened fire-place, the picture of the annunciation over the mantel-piece—all reeled around her senses as a vision, and wheeled off, carrying with them the outside world and all consciousness of being.

To her, existence was blotted out for two hours.

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"Wake up, lady! wake up! your breakfast is ready, and so is your horse!"

Catherine started up at the voice of her landlady, and gazed around, bewildered. Then memory flashed upon her, and she sprung to her feet, and began hastily and nervously to fasten her habit.

"Here is water, lady, and napkins—and is there anything else I can bring you?"

"No, thank you, you are very good."

"How do you find yourself?"

"Better—I think. How long have I slept?"

"Just two hours. I wished to let you lie longer, but my dear old fellow insisted on keeping his word with you."

"I'm glad he did. It was very needful. But you are kind, and I thank you."

Catherine bathed her head and face, and the good hostess combed and arranged her hair, and fastened her habit, and took her down stairs, where a comfortable breakfast awaited her. It was yet but seven o'clock, and the farmer assured her that she had time enough to reach Washington by nightfall, and that she would be far better able to do it from having had this rest. She hastily swallowed a few mouthfuls of food, drank a cup of strong coffee, that gave her a sort of fictitious strength, and then arose from the table and quickly prepared to resume her journey. The good woman followed her with many kind wishes, and the good man set her in her saddle, and while adjusting her comfortably, gave directions about the nearest way to W——, the next considerable town upon the road. Then he gave her the reins, and prayed God to bless her. She thanked her kind hosts earnestly again, put whip to her horse and galloped away, leaving her valuable pony in pledge.

The farm-house, with its garden, orchard and vineyard, barns, wheat-stack and stubble-fields vanished behind her flying steed. The country was now open, and she flew on and on before the wind. And now she had entered the forest, and she hurried through its deep shadows, flecked with golden sun-glances. When she emerged again, and found herself in the open meadows, it was high noon, and the August sun was pouring down his burning rays with intolerable power. But on and on she rode, unconscious of suffering in herself, and unheedful of the fatigue of her panting and perspiring steed.

It was two hours past noon when she reached the town of W——, and at the very first inn on the suburbs her horse stopped, of his own will, nor could she, with all her efforts, persuade or force him to budge a step. A boy, a colored woman, and then the landlord, his wife and all the children came out, to see a lady riding, unattended, who could not make her horse go.

"He wants food and drink, I suppose," said Catherine, to the landlord, who at last came to offer her aid. And then

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she alighted, and requesting the host to have the animal attended to very quickly, followed the landlady, who conducted her into the rustic parlor. She was now so fatigued and stiffened, that the act of standing or walking was really painful, so she sank down upon the lounge, and declining all the landlady's offers of refreshing, waited a weary half hour, while her horse was feeding. At the end of that time, she mounted again, and resumed her journey. She passed through the town, and over the wooded hills that environed it on the east, and came down upon the plains. The heat of the afternoon was of that close, breathless, insufferable kind, that always forebodes an awful storm. The sense of suffering was beginning to force itself upon her, and as for the animal she rode, she could not, by any means, coax or drive him beyond a walk. Then her mind became again anxiously concentrated upon the end of her journey, to the total exclusion of all other thought, and all sense. It was in this state that she arrived at the foot of a steep hill, covered with copse-wood, ascended its top, descended the other side, and reached a small river at its foot. She drew up her feet, doubled her riding-skirt up over the horse's shoulders, and guided him into the ford, and—with the water splashing around, and rising even to the animal's neck, she crossed the river—so mechanically, so unconsciously, that had people asked her, thereafter, whether she had forded a stream in her journey, she could not have told them.

The sun was declining to his setting, and the sky was heavy with clouds, while still the air was close, sultry, stifling and oppressive. Everything indicated the approach before long of a tremendous tornado. The shades of evening were falling thickly around her when she was passing through the dense, low-lying forest south-west of Washington. When she emerged from its deep obscurity and came out into the open country, an alarming phenomenon arrested her attention; the eastern horizon was luridly lighted by a low, dull, red glow, like the earliest dawn of a wintry morning. Her road led directly towards this murky light, and her eyes were fascinated to it. As she rode and gazed, the blood-tinged illumination seemed to glow and brighten on her vision, and presently after, began to send up meteoric streams of fire towards the clouds. As the distance lessened between herself and the awful conflagration, it began to illumine her path more and more distinctly and fearfully, until every object for miles around was plainly visible in the lurid glare. And then at last Catherine recognized it for a burning city—the city of Washington wrapped in flames!

On descending the road towards the Potomac, a scene difficult to describe met her view. All up and down the river and on either shore, were seen in the red glare multitudes of fugitives—some seeking to cross, some in boats on the water, and some landed and hurrying in disorder up the country.

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Soon after this, she met great numbers of terrified women and children, flying from their desolated homes. The greatest possible consternation and confusion prevailed among these panic-stricken fugitives. The most terrific reports were rife: That the enemy were in hot pursuit—that the slaves had been incited to revolt, and mad with emancipation, and drunk with all manner of licentious excess were perpetrating more horrible and revolting atrocities than those which at Hampton, the year before, steeped the country in blood and shame.

Rendered by despair senseless as the dead to all these dangers, Catherine laboriously pushed and threaded her way down the road, blocked up with horses, carriages, foot-passengers, baggage waggons, cattle, and all the miscellaneous emptyings of a hastily and fearfully evacuated city. As she drew near the Long Bridge, she heard by the frightened talk of the flying multitude, that the end of the bridge on the Virginia side had been burned to prevent, or at least delay, the pursuit of the enemy. She then turned her horse's head up the course of the river, with the intention of crossing by the Georgetown Ferry. She had no trouble in picking her way through the thicket under the hills that bordered the Potomac from this point, for every minutest object on the way was made painfully distinct by the light of the burning city. When nearly opposite Georgetown, she descried the ferry-boat put off from the other shore, and propelled rapidly across the river. She stopped her horse, intending to wait and return with it. In less than five minutes it touched the beach, and a carriage with a small party of ladies, escorted by a guard of nine cavalry volunteers, landed.

In the hurried consultation that ensued among them, Catherine learned that the party consisted of Mrs. Madison and her friends and attendants, flying from the burning Presidential Mansion. When they had turned their horses' heads up the river road, Catherine rode down to the boat, and addressed herself to the ferryman, asking to be taken over. The man looked at her in astonishment, and when he saw that she was in earnest, advised her strongly against the trip, telling her that she had best turn rein and ride as fast and as far as possible in the opposite direction—that every one had fled or was flying from Washington, that the city was in the undisputed possession of the enemy, who were demolishing, burning and laying waste the metropolis at pleasure. There was no need to tell that—the fact was awfully visible by the light of the great conflagration, But Catherine still persisted in her purpose, replying to his objections that some one whom she did not wish to desert was in the hands of the enemy; and at last prevailed upon him to put her across.

She was landed on the flats west of the city. Here crowds of women and children, pale with terror, and weeping and wailing for their ruined city and lost homes, waited impati-

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ently to be taken across the river, out of the way of more horrible fates, which the atrocious reputation of Cockburn and his Cossacks reasonably taught them to dread. Catherine left them hurrying in mad confusion into the boat, while she hastened on to the very scene of peril from which they were flying. She passed swiftly over the low and marshy fields that then lay between the river and the heart of the city, and entered upon Twenty-first Street, above the War Department, and turned into Pennsylvania Avenue.

What a scene! Volumes of smoke, as from an enormous volcano, were disgorged in massive clouds, and settled like a black canopy over the doomed city. The President's Palace and the Treasury Building, swathed in their shrouds of fire, illumined all the scene with terrific splendour. Even at the distance of several hundred yards off, her eyes ached with the insufferable light and scorching heat. At the distance of a mile, the Capitol, wrapped in its mantle of flame, sent forth a hail-storm of sparks and burning brands.

In strange and awful contrast to this appalling progress of destruction, was the dread silence that reigned over the falling city. All the terror, consternation, hurry and distraction were left without. Here, upon the very scene of action, all was comparatively quiet. The houses were shut up, and if they contained any inmates, they were hiding in obscurity. The streets seemed forsaken by the conquerors, as by the conquered. There was no shout of soldiery, no martial music, no sign or expression of a grand military triumph anywhere, no sound to be heard from the powerful enemy in possession, except a distant, dull, heavy, monotonous tramp, as of many retreating hoofs. The flames were doing their work of destruction in silence, only broken by the occasional crash of some falling roof, cupola, or pillar, or some reverberating explosion. Catherine passed under the blinding glare and scathing heat of the burning Treasury Building, and turning the elbow of the Avenue, came upon a sentinel, who instantly levelled his musket and challenged her with "Who goes there?"

"The Admiral," said Catherine, drawing rein.

The sentinel lowered his musket with a surly "Pass on" followed by a low, insulting comment. Catherine had merely intended to express her errand, and had chanced upon the conutersign.

"Where shall I find your commander?" she next said.

"The General?"

"No—Admiral Cockburn."

"Corporal," said the soldier, in a low, distinct voice. The Corporal of the Guard advanced.

"What did you want, mum?"

"To be conducted to the presence of the Admiral," answered Catherine, with an imploring glance. Perhaps something in her countenance moved the pity of the officer—perhaps he

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thought her a sufferer from the devastation of the city. At least he volunteered to be her guide, and requesting her to accompany him, led the way down the avenue towards the Capitol.

"Did you know, mum, that a curfew had been proclaimed, and the citizens forbidden to appear in the streets after eight o'clock in the evening?"

"No, and if I had, I should have been still obliged to disregard it, for a matter of more than life and death hangs upon my interview with the Admiral," replied Catherine, speaking out of the fulness of her heart.

The distance between the Treasury Building and the Capitol was about one mile, and the glare of the conflagration at each end, revealed a line of sentinels, posted at regular intervals the whole length of the avenue.

A ride of ten minutes brought them to the encampment of the enemy on the Capitol Hill, east of the burning edifice. Here, indeed, prevailed much of the noise and disorder consequent upon the relaxation of discipline after a day of severe action. Nearly four thousand men were resting, some leaning upon their muskets, some seated upon the grass, and some flat upon the ground, in the death-like sleep of drunkenness or exhaustion.

A group of officers, with their gorgeous scarlet and gold laced dresses resplendent in the glare, stood watching the progress of the fire. Towards these the Corporal conducted Catherine. One from among them advanced, laughing coarsely, as he exclaimed—"Who have we got here, Corporal?—a woman, by George! and a young and pretty one, too, to judge by the pretty figure. You're welcome, madam. What, afraid? Well, I suppose you have formed a terrible opinion of me from the newspapers, which delight to represent us all as devils. Never fear me. Satan is not half so black as the saints paint him! You shall be far safer under my government than under Madison's. Ross says he makes no war upon letters or ladies. Ho, ho, ho! Ross—*he's* sentimental, you know! Well! d—— letters, but *I* make no war upon ladies either, except with Cupid's weapons—ho, ho, ho, ho, ho! What, afraid still. Come! let's see your face; never saw a shy woman yet that had not a face worth seeing."

Abashed at this manner of address, Catherine hung her head, until the Corporal whispered—

"Rear Admiral Cockburn."

Then she stole a glance at the speaker.

A flashy, overdressed, yet slovenly person, a florid complexion, a clear, mirthful, audacious blue eye—a sensual mouth, and a free, dashing, insolent manner, marked the licensed Pirate of the Chesapeake, and the boon companion of the profligate Prince of Wales.

"What, shy yet! By your leave, my dear!" said the Admiral, chucking his hand under Catherine's chin, and raising

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her face. Poor Kate's face, as well as her hair and her dress, was stained with dust and tears and perspiration, and her features were pale and haggard with sorrow, anxiety and extreme fatigue. The profligate dropped her chin with a start, as if it had burnt him, exclaiming—

"Whisht! Ugh! Brownies and kelpies, and witches on broomsticks! Oh! ho, ho, ho, ho, ho! *Ugh!* what a face! Here, Corporal, I pass her over to you; you seem to be kindly disposed. There is no accounting for tastes, so—Oh! ho, ho, ho, ho! I make you a present of her. *Oh-h!* where can I find a dozen pretty girls to get the cross out of my eyes?"

Mortified, repulsed, despairing, Catherine stood by her horse, with one arm thrown around his neck, and her head resting upon it.

A low hum of voices around her, seemingly incident upon some one's arrival on the scene of action, and then a sweet, deep-toned voice near her, inquiring—

"Can we be so happy as to serve you in any way, lady? I should be most grateful for the opportunity. To be able to render any service is always a most soothing amelioration to me of the harsh duties of war."

"Major-General Ross," whispered the friendly Corporal, stooping to her ear.

Catherine raised her head, and saw, bending towards her, a very handsome man, in the early prime of life, of a grave, sweet, thoughtful, and somewhat melancholy expression of countenance, who regarding her with respectful sympathy, repeated his offers of service, saying—

"If I am so fortunate as to be able to assist you, lady, pray do not hesitate a moment to command me."

"Thank you, thank you—I—wished to speak with the Admiral—but—"

"With *me!* ho, ho, ho, ho, ho! I beg your pardon! I beg to decline the honor! Talk to Ross—he's sentimental, *and*—responsible! the father of a family, ect.—'a married man myself, with several sweet children, and venerate the sanctity,'* ect. Eh, Ross? Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!"

"Speak with me, lady. I shall be most happy to aid you. What is it? Have you or yours suffered, or received any injury by our soldiers that I can redress? Can I help you in any way?" asked General Ross, in gentle, earnest tones.

"Yes, yes, I think you may have power to do me a vital service."

"Name it, lady. My word is pledged."

"His word is pledged! Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!—pledged to a scare-crow!—pledged to a kelpie!—pledged to a witch on a broomstick! Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho! *Oh-h!*" shouted the coarse Admiral.

* Words used by the generous and unfortunate General Ross, while trying to soothe the fears of Mrs. E——.

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The eye of Ross flashed for an instant, but sheathed its fire as he turned to Catherine, and, taking her hand respectfully, drew her aside from the proximity of the brutal Cockburn, who, in addition to his other graces, was now doubly inflamed by drink and triumph.

"A tryste! a tryste with the Queen of the Kelpies! Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!" roared the Admiral, holding his sides, and bending forward to shout his insulting laughter, and then stalking off.

"Explain, lady. I shall be proud to serve you. Pray have confidence in me, madam, and believe in the sincerity of my words," said General Ross, still holding her hand, while she passed her other one slowly to and fro across her forehead, as was her habit when embarrassed, trying to clear her mind and arrange her thoughts.

But as soon as she was relieved from the presence of the coarse and insolent Cockburn, she recovered breath and self-possession, and spoke clearly and to the point.

"I thank you, sir—I deeply thank you. I will tell you. I heard, in my distant mountain home, that my husband, Major Clifton, of the —— Regiment of Volunteers, had been dangerously wounded in the action at St. Leonard's. I did not hear that he had also been taken prisoner. Believing him to be still in the American camp, and fearing that he needed more constant attention than he could get, and feeling very anxious to hear directly from him, I sent his favorite servant to find him, directing the man to remain with him, and to write me of his state. He, this servant, was a poor, rustic negro, sir, totally ignorant of the usages of war. When he reached the American camp, he discovered that his master was a prisoner on board the British fleet. He procured a boat and boarded the Albion. He was taken as a spy, of course, and, to end the miserable story, awaits only the orders of Admiral Cockburn to be executed. I heard that yesterday evening, and I instantly set off, and between that hour and this have ridden more than seventy miles, almost without stopping for food or rest, and entered the city to-night alone, when all were flying from it, to beg this man's life from the Admiral. Now, you know, *you know*, how vital is my request, my prayer."

"You could not have done more for your father, lady!" replied General Ross, with a gentle, earnest wonder on his fine countenance. "You could not have done more for your father than you have done for this slave."

"Do not wonder, sir. He would have laid down his life for us. But oh, sir! time presses—death threatens!"

"Be at peace, lady! The life or death of this slave, of such vital importance to you, is really a matter of so little moment to Admiral Cockburn, that I have not the slightest hesitation in promising to secure for you his pardon and liberation."

"Oh, may the Lord for ever bless you, sir! I never, never can tell you how grateful I am—"

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"Peace, peace, dear lady. It is absolutely nothing. I would to Heaven I could really do anything to merit your kind word and kind remembrance, when others are cursing me for what the stern duties of war force me to do!"

"I shall ever remember you, sir, with the deepest gratitude."

"And now, Mrs. Clifton, you must have rest and refreshment. My head-quarters are at Doctor E——'s. His amiable family are at home. They will gladly afford you comfort and assistance. Permit me to conduct you thither."

He replaced her carefully in her saddle, and taking the reins, led her horse until they reached the commodious mansion of Doctor E——. Here he introduced Mrs. Clifton, who was received with respect and sympathy. Leaving her in the care of the kind and hospitable family, he then set out to seek Admiral Cockburn.

Catherine was shown to a chamber, and afforded the refreshments of a partial bath and food. After which she lay down on a sofa, to rest, and await the return of the gentle and generous Ross.

In about half an hour she was summoned to the parlor, where she found him standing. He advanced to meet her, and said—

"Mrs. Clifton, I have the pardon here, but I very much fear—" and his face clouded over—"I very much fear it will be too late."

"'*Too late!*" echoed Catherine, sinking into a chair, as she repeated the saddest words in the language—"Too late. Is he dead?" she asked, covering her face with her hands.

"No, Mrs. Clifton, but he has been ordered for execution at eight o'clock to-morrow."

"IT IS NOT TOO LATE!" exclaimed Catherine, starting up with electric energy. "Give me—oh! give me the pardon! —I will take it there in time!"

"Lady, the distance is over forty miles—and the necessary delays, and the dangers that threaten a young woman, travelling alone by night, through a country infested—"

"*Oh!* give me the pardon! give it me, I implore you! I will take it there safely, and in time. Heaven has protected me through dangers as great, and Heaven will protect me through these! Oh, for the love of Heaven, do not hesitate! Every moment is inestimable when a '*too late*' threatens us! Give me the pardon!"

"Nay, lady, I can send a courier with the pardon, rather than that you should go, for many reasons."

"Oh, no, no, your courier would want to stop, to eat and drink—or he might fall in with some of our people, and be killed or taken,—or if he escaped, through his explanation of his errand—why, that very errand would be rendered futile, by the time lost in investigation. *I* shall pause for nothing, Heaven will protect and speed me. Oh! give me the pardon.

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Do not delay! *All* depends upon promptitude. Alas! excuse my importunity! but give me the pardon!"

General Ross attempted to dissuade her; but neither arguments nor persuasions had the least effect upon her resolution. At last, overruled by her earnestness, vehemence and faith, he yielded—handed her the pardon, and went out to see if he could procure her a fresh horse.

When he entered again, after a successful search, he found her equipped for her second night's journey, and standing in the midst of her astonished hosts. He informed her that her horse was ready, and also that he had provided her a guard, to escort her beyond Bladensburg. Then she took a hasty and grateful leave of her amiable entertainers, and accepting the arm of the Major-General, left the house.

As General Ross placed her in the saddle, and handed her the reins, he said—

"Heaven protect and speed you, lady. Farewell—and sometimes remember me."

"I will remember and pray for General Ross while I live," said Catherine. And then she put whip to her horse, and rode away, upheld by a wonderful energy.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE GOAL.

Thro' waves, thro' storms and clouds
He gently clears thy way,
Trust thou his grace—so shall the night
Soon end in joyous day.—MORAVIAN.

INCALCULABLE is the power of the spirit over the flesh. In the intense absorption of her soul by one hope, Catherine was carried above all consciousness of the excessive exertion, and all sense of the extreme fatigue that was oppressing and harassing her bodily powers almost to dissolution. But a watchful Providence, that had already thrice arrested her dreadful journey, now a fourth time interposed to compel her to rest. She had parted with her escort, when past the British outposts, beyond Bladensburg. And by the time she had reached Long Old Fields, the storm, that had been threatening all the evening, burst suddenly, with terrible violence, driving her for shelter into a farm-house. And again, wondering and compassionate hosts persuaded her to lie down and repose, and once more, as soon as her weary head dropped upon the pillow, deep sleep, like an irresistible mandate of the All Merciful, fell upon her, and, despite of pain of body and anguish of mind, she slept soundly for several hours;—slept, as the prisoner sleeps the night before execution;—slept, as the martyr sleeps in the intervals of torture upon the rack;—slept, while the tempest raged with awful fury;—while the rain fell in torrents, and the wind rushed through the forest, carrying destruction on its wings; while gigantic trees were

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twisted off, or torn up by the roots, and great rivers were swelled to floods;—she slept the deep, dreamless sleep "God giveth His beloved." Probably to this Providential sleep she owed the preservation of her life, for the spirit that can goad the flesh to exertion unto death, cannot save it from dissolution.

When she awoke, the storm had passed, and the stars were shining dimly in the early dawn of day. She started up, remorseful and affrighted to find she had slept so long, and to recollect that her journey was not half over. It was now four o'clock, and she had yet nearly thirty miles to ride before eight, or all was lost! Her pitying hosts tried to persuade her to wait and partake of their early breakfast, which, they said, would be ready in half an hour; but finding her bent upon setting forward, they hastily got some refreshment together, and permitted her to mount her horse and depart. But she had not proceeded many yards, before she found that the motion of her steed gave her great pain—pain so sharp, as to force itself to be felt through all her intense mental abstraction. She checked her horse's trot, and put him into a gallop, whose smooth, wavy motion, somewhat relieved her distress.

The morning was sparklingly brilliant after the storm; the forest trees and the grass were spangled by the rain-drops, and the slanting rays of the rising sun striking deep into the foliage, flecked all its green leaves with golden light. Her horse was fresh, his blood was up, and on they sped like an arrow through the woods.

Suddenly she stopped and reeled backwards—that sharp pain again; it pierced her side and chest like a sword; it caught away her breath, and caused the drops of perspiration to burst from her pale forehead. But not for pain, or even for the fear of death, must she pause. She might perish, but her purpose must first be accomplished, if possible.

Bracing her nerves, and steeling her soul against the sense of suffering, she put whip to her horse, and flew on, as before the wind, leaving forest, meadow and hamlet—farm-house, field and flood, far behind her. Again and again the sharp agony arrested her, like the hand of death—but in vain to stop her progress—each time the pang could only delay her a moment, and then on and on she sped, spurning the ground away in her desperate flight.

Before her, in the distance, glimmered the blue Patuxent, the longed-for goal. Oh! that river; for an hour past it had seemed as near as now. Would she ever approach it? On and on she sped, while woods and towns and plains whirled behind her in a mad reel. A fearful change was coming over her. The sense of pain, with all other sense, had gradually left her. A stupor of weariness supervened; her brain reeled, her sight failed. Oh! that river, how it gleamed and disappeared, and gleamed again before her. Would she ever,

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ever be nearer to it? How dim the sunlight was, and how unsteady the ground; and the boundaries of the sky and earth were molten together and lost; and it was no longer the action of her horse, but the dreadful rocking and upheaving of the ground, that kept her moving, moving, moving, for ever. Oh! that river! how it glimmered and sparkled, and sparkled and flashed into her brain. Would she ever, ever, ever reach it, or was she going round in a circle for ever? Reason was failing at last—past, present and future—things that were, and things that seemed, swam thickly together upon brain and heart; surely the hour of dissolution had come, for dense darkness and heaviness were settling like grave clods upon brain and heart. Oh! God, that river!—had she really reached it at last, or was it an illusion of delirium? Its waves rolled and flashed in silvery splendor at the foot of the hill, below her feet! But what was that? Angels in Heaven! what was that? A sight to call back ebbing life! Down in the dell, the glitter of bayonets and the glow of scarlet coats—an open square of British infantry, enclosing an execution scene! Clutching the pardon from her bosom and holding it aloft at arm's length, she roused her fast failing strength for a last effort, and hurled herself and steed furiously down the hill upon the scene of doom. The flash of steel around her—the gallows tree—the cart—the prisoner—the fatal noose—and more than all, close beside her, the form of him—her own—her Clifton—madly loved in life and death, and then—darkness closed in upon her life, and all was lost.

As the reins fell from powerless hands upon the horse's neck, the noble animal stood stock still; had he lifted a leg, it must have been fatal to the swooning rider; but he stood like a statue, while her form swayed to and fro for a moment, and then Archer Clifton sprang forward and received her in his arms. He picked up the paper as it fell from her stiffening fingers, and guessing its purport, passed it to the officer in command. Then he sank upon one knee, drew her insensible form to and supported it against his breast, while he untied her hat and loosened her spencer.

A little bustle ensued around him; but he did not heed it, bending over Catherine. The execution was stayed, the prisoner released, and poor Jack, half-dead with terror before, and half mad with joy now, had still strength and sense and affection enough left to run to a spring hard by, and dip up his hat full of water, and the next instant he was kneeling with it by the side of his mistress, to bathe her hands.

"Who is she?" "Where did she come from?" "What is her name?" "Who *is* the lady?" "Do you know her, sir?" asked some of the officers, crowding around with offers of assistance.

"This lady is my wife, gentlemen! Air! air, if you please!" exclaimed Archer Clifton, waving them off, and giving his sole attention to Catherine. "Kate!"

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The sound of that thrilling voice—the clasp of those thrilling arms, had power to call back her spirit from the confines of the invisible world. Her pale, pale eyelids quivered.

"Kate!" he exclaimed again, raising her higher upon his breast.

A shuddering sigh convulsed her bosom—her languid eyes unclosed.

"Kate!"

"Yes, Kate!" she echoed, nodding her head with that quick, nervous, spasmodic gesture common to her,

"And why have you done this thing? Why have you placed yourself *en scene* like a third-rate opera dancer?"

She raised her fading eyes to his face, pleadingly, murmuring—

"Your wishes—the reprieve!"

"Well, what of that? Was there no one to bring it but yourself?"

Too feeble to enter upon the long explanation required, she only shook her head, murmuring at intervals—

"Forgive—forgive—I could not see him die. Patience, patience—indeed, I will not trouble you, love,—I will go away again, far away! Maybe God will let me die!"

The last words were breathed forth in a long, deep sigh, and she sank away again into insensibility.

Poor Jack, kneeling by her side, bathed her hand with the water he had brought, and with his tears that fell like rain.

Major Clifton laid her head down upon the green sward, and rising to his feet, addressed the officer in command, saying—

"Sir, I am a prisoner of war, as you know. Yet, my wife is in a dying state here, and I wish to convey her to a place of safety and repose."

"Major Clifton will consider himself on his parole, and command any assistance we may be able to render him or his heroic wife," said Captain ————, at the same time showing him a note from General Ross to that effect, which had been folded in with the pardon.

"I think, sir," added the officer, "that there is a farm-house near here, belonging to a planter of the name of Greenfield, where your lady would be hospitably received, and well taken care of; perhaps you had better send your servant thither to borrow a carriage."

Thanking the officer for his civility and good advice, Major Clifton immediately acted upon it by dispatching Jack to the house, while he himself supported Catherine until the arrival of the carriage. He then placed her in it, and she was driven slowly to "Greenwood." Here she was kindly received by the planter's wife and sisters, who tenderly undressed her and put her to bed. A physician was summoned, who, when he arrived and looked at her and felt her pulse, and heard the circumstances, pronounced her insensibility to be not a swoon,

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but a trance-coma—the result of excessive fatigue of mind and body. He said that such stupors, if prematurely broken, might end in convulsions and madness—or if left, too, to themselves, might terminate in death; that her state was exceedingly critical, and that her rest was by no means to be broken, unless there was a perceptible failure in her pulse, in which case the stimulants and restorative he should leave must be applied and administered, and himself instantly summoned. And so he left her.

Having seen Catherine thus at rest, and having received many assurances from her gentle-hearted hostess that every care and attention should be given her, Major Clifton took leave, and returned to render himself up to his captors, who were just about to return to their ship. He went with them. And when they had arrived on board the Albion, an agreeable surprise awaited him. A gentleman in the uniform of an American general stood upon the deck, attended by a flag of truce, and Major Clifton immediately recognized Colonel (now General) Conyers, who instantly advanced to meet him, and shaking hands heartily, exclaimed—

"You did not expect to find me here? I have come concerning the arrangement of a change of prisoners. Colonel Lithgow, of his Britannic Majesty's ——— Regiment, and taken prisoner by our people in the same engagement in which *you* fell into the hands of the enemy, is now offered in exchange for yourself."

"Yes, sir," said Captain ———, advancing towards them, "and I am exceedingly happy to say that an exchange has been effected, and to congratulate you on your restoration to liberty."

Major Clifton bowed deeply, and requested the use of a boat to leave the ship.

"Nay—yourself and General Conyers will stay and dine with us?" asked Captain ———.

But Major Clifton, thanking him for his invitation, and also for much kindness and attention received during his sojourn as a captive among them, declined remaining longer, and repeated his request for a boat.

"Oh, *mine* is here at your service. *I* am going ashore with you of course," said General Conyers.

"I beg your pardon, sir! the boat you came in has been taken by Captain Fairfax, who has gone ashore with it."

"Ah, true!"

"*Captain Fairfax?*" asked Archer Clifton.

"Yes, my friend, Captain Fairfax. Frank accompanied me hither in search of *yourself*. Some news of vital importance he had to communicate, which he did not impart to me. He could not wait for your return at all, so he went ashore in search of you. He would have found you sooner if he had waited here, which proves the truth of the old proverb—'Most haste, least speed."

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"The boat is manned, sir," said a lieutenant to Major Clifton.

General Conyers and himself then took leave of the British officers, entered the boat, and were rowed swiftly to the land. As soon as they had stepped upon the beach, and found themselves alone, Conyers grasped the hand of Clifton, and shaking it cordially, said—

"So, you have won noble Catherine? Well, I congratulate you with a whole heart, though you have won her from my hopes."

"Won her from your hopes?"

"Ay, Archer, I loved her."

"Loved her?"

"Yes, and love her!"

"Love her?"

"Yes, and shall *always* love her, highly and purely though, as a saint loves an angel."

"You astonish me."

"And I shall astonish you more, perhaps. Three several times in one year I wooed her, and three several times was my suit rejected by her."

"I say you astound me! Your suit rejected by Catherine! *Yours?* Can this be possible?"

"Possible as that I was nearly driven to despair by her rejection."

Major Clifton threw his hand to his brow and gazed at the speaker in amazement, while he compared the claims of General Conyers with his own. General Conyers, with his haughty and powerful connection in town and country; his immense unincumbered estates; his high military rank; and last, not least, his eminently handsome person, accomplished mind, and graceful address;—General Conyers, in every social, official, and personal dignity, highly superior. And himself, with his limited circle; his debt-encumbered property; his medium post in the army; and his very moderate share of personal attraction, and he exclaimed again—

"Catherine reject *you?*"

"Three distinct times, most firmly."

"Why, upon what possible pretext could she have done so?"

"Ay, sure enough! Upon what possible pretext?" smiled General Conyers, ruefully. "Upon the plea that she did not love me, save only 'as a sister or a spirit might.' I won her respect, esteem, friendship, all but her love! She was a frank, high-minded, pure-hearted girl. She gave me the greatest proof of confidence she could possibly give, and at the same instant struck the only death-blow to dangerous hopes that she could possibly strike, she told me that she could never be more than a faithful friend to me, for that she loved another."

Major Clifton started, and grasped the arm of his compan-

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ion, but instantly recovering his self-control, he inquired, in a calm voice—

"And who did she say was that other?"

"Nay, she never breathed his name. She could not have done that. She was trying to do me good when she informed me. I remember well her sweet and holy looks and words. At first she flushed and paled, hesitating between generous impulse and womanly reserve; and then as principle rose above instinct, her face glowed with an expression such as I have seen in the pictures of St. Agnes;—a warm, high, holy look, an inspired look, such as might well become the countenance of the Virgin Martyr, and she said, speaking to herself, 'There is no good reason why I should not reveal any secret of my heart, if the revelation can help any other soul to tranquillity and strength.' Then to me—'Listen: You are not the only sorely disappointed one. Who indeed, is joyous that is past childhood? I, too, have missed life's crowning joy—the love of one I love. But what then? If we cannot have joy in this life of probation, there yet remains duty, and the peace its performance yields; and friends, and the cheerfulness their society gives; and God, and the divine comfort His service brings.'"

"She said that? She said that?" groaned Clifton.

"Yes. You seem strongly moved, Archer?"

"I am! I am! You do not know with how much reason! But go on! Tell me more of her."

"She never breathed the name of him she loved to my ear, yet I knew her whole secret. I had suspected it months before. Shall I tell you why?"

"Yes! Go on!"

"It was at the Governor's levée, where I was first introduced to her, and where you met after a long absence; I was present at the casual meeting. I beheld the strong emotion that she could not conceal. Some hours after that I was near her, when unobserved by all except myself, and unconscious of my presence also, she chanced to witness the reconciliation between yourself and your chosen bride. I saw her face grow paler than death, and then the meek head bow in submission, and the meek hands fold as in prayer, and the meek voice murmur low and fervently, 'Thank God! Oh! God help me to say that sincerely.' I had been interested in her before; but I saw that, and I loved her from that hour, the sweet, the lovely, the Madonna-like maiden! I loved her with an affection as free from passion as it was from selfishness, and as free from both as her own pure, saintly nature. And I offered her my heart and hand, as I said. And she sweetly and gratefully declined them, as I might have known before;—unveiling the sanctuary of her priceless heart, to quiet me for ever with the revelation of another master there."

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" said Clifton.

"What disturbs you so, Archer?"

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"Never mind! Never mind! And so rejecting you as a lover, she won you as a friend?"

"For life and death and eternity. Yes."

"That was a triumph! Rejected lovers seldom become friends! That was a rare triumph! But then Catherine is a rare woman."

"Very rare!"

"Truly nick-named 'Maria Theresa.'"

"Catherine! 'Maria Theresa?' By whom? By some one, I suppose, who, recognizing her strong, practical mind, sees nothing better in her nature—sees not the pure heart and the lofty spirit of infinitely higher value than that."

"Heaven bless you, Conyers, for your good opinion of Catherine. But I wish to put a case to you, only an imaginary case, you observe, Conyers?"

"Yes! Well?"

"Suppose you had married Catherine?"

"That is very imaginary! Well?"

"And suppose that you had discovered her to be unworthy of your good opinion?"

"Impossible! It could not have happened, because she could not have been unworthy."

"But suppose that her unworthiness had been made manifest to you beyond all chance of mistake or doubt?"

"D—n it! Don't let me be profane. It *couldn't* have been made manifest to me, I tell you! Could any person or anything demonstrate to me that the sun darkened the earth, or the clouds dropped powdered charcoal, or that fig-trees bore thorns? There are some things that can't be proved, because they can't exist!"

Major Clifton thrust his hand in his bosom, and drew thence a letter in a gray envelope, and handing it to General Conyers, asked—

"Do you know that hand-writing?"

"Certainly, I do."

"Whose is it?"

"Mrs. Catherine Clifton's."

"Are you sure?"

"Pooh! Of course I am! I am familiar with the writing!"

"Could you swear to it?"

"You are very emphatic in this matter! Let me see the letter again. Yes, I could swear to it."

"And now will you do me the favor to read it?"

General Conyers, with some hesitation, began to read, but before getting half through, the blood rushed to his brow, and crushing the letter in his hand, he hurled it beneath his feet, and setting his heel upon it, ground it into the earth.

"What do you think of it, now?" asked Clifton, bitterly.

"Think of it!—it is an infernal forgery! If any man had brought me that letter, and said that Catherine wrote it, I should have treated it just as I have done now, to show my

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contempt for the forgery; and then I should have raised it with my sword's point, and thrust it down his throat, to express my loathing of the forger or the accomplice."

"And yet, just now you could have sworn to the hand-writing."

"Death! Yes! And for which presumption I earnestly beg your pardon, Clifton!"

"And now you are quite as much convinced that she did not write it. How can you explain this?"

"Why, simply thus—that the whole of Catherine's noble life is a refutation of the slander contained in that letter. Sir! it is a d—d forgery! Look at it! See how easy the hand is imitated! Give me a pen and ink, and though I have not much talent for imitation, I will produce you a fac simile of Catherine's hand-writing. I repeat, I beg your forgiveness for saying that that was Catherine's. I said so, because it strongly resembled hers, and I did not know the vile purport! Oh, I trust, Clifton, that you signally punished the conspirator who wrote it! I can well believe that you neither ate, slept, said your prayers, went to church or into her presence, until you had pursued the forger, and punished him or her to the utmost extent of the law!"

They had now arrived at Greenwood, and Major Clifton, without replying, conducted his companion into the house, and introduced him to the planter's family. On inquiry concerning the state of Catherine, he learned that she still lay without any sign of life, except the faint beating of her heart. Leaving General Conyers with his host, he went up into his wife's chamber. He wished to be alone with her. There is something in a sound faith that always makes a strong impression. The deep, thorough earnestness of confidence in Catherine's perfect integrity, exhibited by Conyers, had shaken Clifton's firm convictions of her guilt to their uprootings, as the whirlwind shakes the oak. Ay, and *he* was shaken—literally shaken, terribly shaken, by strong passion, as he exclaimed to himself—

"Oh, would to Heaven I could think as he does! I am no longer a youth, credulous of happiness, but if I could only thoroughly believe in Kate as he does—or once see her innocence proved, it would fill my heart with joy." He entered the chamber, and went up to her bedside. There was a pallor spread like death over her brow. "But she was always so pale," he said, in a voice tremulous with tenderness. So still she lay, so profound was her repose, that her breathing could not be seen or heard, until, alarmed, he stooped and listened, and perceived that her respiration was deep, soft, slow and regular. Her sleep was evidently necessary, healthful and recuperative. He stood and gazed at her sculptured, marble-like face, as her head reposed upon the pillow. He had never seen that noble countenance in the deep repose of sleep before. No, and waking, it had always been disturbed by care,

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or grief, or anxiety, or bashfulness. Now the noble face was in perfect rest. The majesty of truth sat enthroned upon the fine, broad, open forehead, with its eyebrows arched far apart, and more elevated, because the eyelids were shut down, with their dark lashes lying long and still upon her pale cheeks. And the beauty of goodness lay folded in every curve of the lightly-closed and perfect lips. She looked a queen in repose—

"A Queen of noble Nature's crowning,"

whom it were disloyalty to suspect, and treason to accuse. As he gazed, the earnest faith of Conyers came back with ten-fold power to his soul. He more than half abjured his evil convictions, and a flood of tenderness came over his heart. There was no one to see his weakness—not even *her*—the sleeper. He went and closed the door, and returned and kneeled by her side. He took her hand, and bowed his head over it. From that trance-sleep there was no fear, because there was no possibility of waking her yet. He kissed and pressed that hand with sorrowful passion—murmuring—'For once—for this time, I will, *I will* believe you true, my own dear Catherine. My whole nature starves; it starves, and withers, and dies for a perfect reconciliation, a perfect union with you. Oh, for once, let soul and heart be satisfied—let me steel my mind against the thought of evil, and fold you around with my love, and press you to this still denied and hungering, perishing heart.' And he raised her in his arms, and folded her to his bosom, pressing an ardent kiss upon her lips. That passionate kiss sent an electric shock through all her still life. A shuddering sigh shook her bosom; her lips parted in a light, rosy smile; color dawned upon her cheeks, and light beamed on her brow. Alarmed, and remembering the physician's warning that a premature awakening might be fatal, he cautiously laid her down again, and anxiously watched her countenance. She did not awake; nor did the light depart from her brow; nor the colour from her cheeks; nor the smile from her lips. "How she loves me. Her soul as well as her person is mine. How she loves me, even in sleep—even in this trance-sleep, with all her senses locked. How she loves me—my Kate! my own! my wife! How she loves me—yet no more than I love her. Witness this worn frame of mine, that sorrow, like years, has aged! My own—"

A light step upon the stairs, and a rap at the door, and he hastened to open it. It was the farmer's little neice, Susannah, who came to say that Captain Fairfax was in the parlor, waiting to see Major Clifton. He turned back an instant, to arrange the coverlet, gave a last glance at the beloved face, and then followed the child down stairs. The staircase led directly down into the parlor, and as soon as he had reached it, he saw Frank Fairfax, who immediately hastened to meet him, and—

"My dear Frank!"

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"My dearest Clifton!"

Were the words of affectionate greeting interchanged, as they shook hands.

"Well, and so you have been married these two years nearly, and I have never had the opportunity of congratulating you till now! Well, better late than never, though it is always a mere form to wish a man joy who has an excess of it already! But, indeed, you have the jewel of the world! If you had only waited two years longer, until I had somewhat recovered the despair of my own awful bereavement, I should have tried to dispute the prize with you—not that I was in love with noble Catherine—I never was but once in love, and I never shall be again—but that I think her just the most precious woman in the world. Nor am I alone in that opinion. I have been in her neighborhood, looking for her, before I came down here to find you, and there I found that she was deeply venerated by her people, and honored, sincerely honored, by all the proud, county aristocrats. And General Ross, the gallant General Ross, 'second only to Wellington himself——' we had to see Admiral Cockburn about this exchange of prisoners, and met General Ross in his company —I wish you had heard the brave and generous Ross speak of your wife. As soon as he knew what we had come for, and recognized your name and *hers*, he took Admiral Cockburn aside, and talked with him in the most emphatic manner, seeming to insist upon something—(and be it known that General Ross exercises a considerable influence over Cockburn, and has even restrained him from greater excesses in Washington than were committed there, obliging him to spare private dwellings, etc.)—and then they came back to where we stood, and the arrangement was effected. And to General Ross's admiration of Catherine's character, and to his generosity, I attribute the ease with which the business was completed. 'Sir,' he said, at parting, 'had your army at Bladensburg been composed of men with spirits equal to that of this heroic woman, your city of Washington had not been taken.' But, where is noble Catherine, now?"

"In a deep sleep, or rather a trance-sleep, superinduced by the excessive toil and fatigue she has lately gone through—"

"'Like a warrior taking his rest!'"

"No—I wish you would not apply that line, great as it is to *her*. She is not heroic, which is masculine—my Kate—she is strong only through her affections, and a very child in timidity at other times. But, my dear Frank, glad as I am to see you, I wish to know—you have not told me the 'business of vital importance,' which Conyers says, made you his companion in seeking me."

The face of Captain Fairfax suddenly clouded over; he put his hand in his bosom, and then hesitating, said—

"You have seen in the papers the obituary notice of a dear friend?"

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"No! Who is it? I have no very dear friend, out of this house, now—whom do you mean?"

"Mrs. Georgia Clifton is no more."

Major Clifton started back, and gazed at the speaker with an expression of deep concern, exclaiming—

"No! Impossible! How could that be? A woman in such fine health!"

"Death is always possible; at all times, and to all persons."

"When, and where, and under what circumstances, did she die? I am very sorry."

"She died a week since, at her house, in Richmond."

"I am very sorry. The cause of her death?"

"One of those virulent summer fevers prevalent in the city just at this season. Her physicians think that hers was fatally aggravated by the life of excitement she had led, and by the friction of something that preyed upon her mind."

Frank paused, and Major Clifton kept his eyes fixed with interest upon his countenance. Frank sighed, and resumed—

"A few days before her death, she sent for me. I went, and found her laboring under great mental distress. She seemed half disposed to make me a confidant; but after much painful hesitation, she reserved her secret, whatever it may have been, and drew from beneath her pillow this letter, which she gave me—exacting an oath, that after her death, and not before—I would hand it to *you* with the seal unbroken. She said that the whole future happiness of yourself and your wife, was concerned in your receiving it. And then, with many sighs and groans—for her eyes seemed too dry for tears—she let me depart. I never saw her again. A few days after that, I heard she was dead."

"The letter?"

"Here it is. You seem very much agitated, Clifton!"

"With reason! Give it me!"

And receiving the letter, Major Clifton hastened to the opposite end of the room and began to read it. It was the confession of a guilty and dying woman. She wrote, that on the borders of eternity there was no false seeming, and no false shame—that all human feelings were lost in remorse, in terror, and in awe. Then she confessed her mad and guilty passion for himself, and all the crimes into which it had tempted her; the slanders that had separated him and his cousin Carolyn, the forged letter that had brought such bitter sorrow to himself and Catherine. All was confessed and deplored. Finally she supplicated his forgiveness, as *he* hoped to be forgiven of God.

The subtle self-love of a man can pardon much in a woman whose motive of action is a strong passion for himself. Great as her wickedness had been—great as the suffering it had caused him, he bore no malice to the dead Georgia. He even after a time resolved to cover her sin from all eyes—to bury it in the grave with her. But merciful as he was in judging

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Georgia—he was stern enough in condemning himself for so readily believing his innocent wife to be guilty. And he divided his broken exclamations between severe self-upbraidings, and rejoicings at her full acquittal—Frank watching him with curiosity and strong interest.

"Oh! fool! fool! fool!"

"What is it, Clifton? Who's a fool?"

"Oh! fool! thrice sodden fool that I've been! Thank Heaven. Oh! thank Heaven!"

"Thank Heaven that he's a thrice sodden fool! That's a new cause for thanksgiving! What's it all about, Archer?"

"Oh! folly! blindness! madness! Heaven be praised! Oh! Heaven be praised!"

"Heaven be praised for folly, blindness, and madness! Well Heaven be praised for all things! But what the deuce is it, Clifton?"

"Mole! mole! Oh, God, how grateful—how rejoiced I am!"

"Oh, Lord, how grateful and rejoiced he is, that he's a mole! Clifton!—What the mischief! Don't keep on striding about, talking to yourself, with your hand clapped to your forehead, like a walking gentleman in a melo-drama, which you always detested! Besides, you know there is no legitimate dramatic reason for a married hero to stride about and obstreperate, excepting only jealousy, and you're not jealous? Come! cease starting and vociferating, and tell me the cause —'the CAUSE, my soul!'"

"Frank! I've been a fool!"

"That's no news."

"And a brute!"

"Who doesn't know that?"

"And a cursed villain."

"Nay, 'I wouldn't hear your enemy say that.'"

"Oh! Frank, Frank, what shall I do?"

"I am sure I don't know, unless you tell me the premises of action."

"I cannot, Frank! Dear Frank, I cannot. The memory of the dead should be sacred; so should the differences of——. I cannot tell you, Frank."

"Hist! Here's the doctor."

Old Doctor Shaw at this moment passed through the parlor, on his way to visit his patient.

Major Clifton accompanied him up stairs to her chamber.

When they reached her bed-chamber, he noticed that the smile had departed from her lips, and the color from her cheeks. The old physician put on his spectacles, and looked scrutinizingly at her face and hands, laid his hand upon her forehead and bosom, to get the temperature, felt her pulse, felt her hands and feet, and finally pronounced her to be doing very well.

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"May she not be wakened up, sir?" asked Clifton, almost selfish in his impatience for a reconciliation.

"By no means. She must be let alone—nature is her best physician, and the sleep she prescribes, her best medicine."

"But, sir, I have something of vital importance to communicate to her!" persisted Clifton.

"Sir, it may be of vital importance to *you*, but it would be of fatal importance to *her*, should you rouse her to communicate it, whatever it is."

Major Clifton was obliged to restrain his eagerness. The physician departed, leaving only one simple direction:—that as soon as she awoke she should be put in a warm bath.

Archer Clifton was then summoned down stairs to join the family at supper. There he found a lively, witty, eccentric personage, who was introduced to him as "Our neighbor, Mr. Perry." And when the evening was over, this gentleman took an opportunity of drawing the officers aside, and confidentially informing them that the ladies of Greenwood were very much crowded with the company of some relations that were staying with them just then, and that although they would certainly press their guests to remain all night, the latter could not do so without putting their kind hostess to much inconvenience; he concluded by offering, and heartily pressing upon the gentlemen the accommodations of his own house. Thanking Mr. Perry for his kindness, they accepted his proffered hospitality and prepared to accompany him home.

Major Clifton went up stairs, intending only to press a parting kiss upon the lips of his now doubly beloved Catherine, but when he reached her chamber, he seemed to forget every thing but her, and sat down by her bedside, watching the sweet, pale, majestic countenance in its death-like repose.

Ay! gaze on, Archer Clifton, for when you have once turned your eyes away, sharp heart-pangs must be yours ere you look upon that sculptured face again!

He remained until summoned by Mr. Perry—then pressing a fond kiss upon the calmed lips, he departed with a tacit promise to be at her side early in the morning.

In the morning!

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

So trial after trial past,
Wilt thou fall at the very last,
Breathless, half in trance,
With the thrill of a great deliverance,
Into our arms for ever more;
And thou shalt know these arms once curled
About thee—what we knew before—
How love is the only good in the world.
Henceforth he loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve.—BROWNING.

THE confidential communication made by Mr. Perry, was probably a ruse on the part of that eccentric gentleman, for the purpose of obtaining the assistance of the officers in "making a night of it" over at his house. Certainly, on reaching the home of their host, they found company awaiting their arrival, and they passed the evening in the jolly festivity of country hospitality. A luxurious supper was served late at night, from which they did not separate until the "small hours." Thus many of the guests overslept themselves the next morning, which delayed the family breakfast several hours. Therefore it was after ten o'clock when Major Clifton, very much against the will of his odd entertainer, bid him farewell, and set out to return to Greenwood. It was eleven o'clock when he reached the farm-house. The ladies were all in their sitting-room, engaged in their various domestic occupations of netting, sewing, knitting, etc., when he entered, and gave them the morning salutation. And then—

"How is Mrs. Clifton this morning, ladies? Can I see her immediately?"

"Mrs. Clifton, sir!" said the eldest lady, looking up in surprise. "Mrs. Clifton is gone sir. Did you not know it?"

"Gone?" repeated Archer Clifton, incredulously.

"Yes, sir."

"*Gone!*" he reiterated in amazement.

"Yes, sir. We certainly thought that you were aware of her departure."

"Most certainly not! *Gone!* When? how? excuse me, madam, but where has she gone?"

"We do not know, sir, indeed, since you cannot tell us. We thought that she had gone to join you, at Mr. Perry's. We were very sorry, but—"

"How long since she left? How did she go? Pardon my vehemence, dear madam."

"We partake of your anxiety, sir. Mrs. Clifton left us about four hours since, at seven o'clock, immediately after breakfast. She went away on the horse that was brought here yesterday as her own. She left us very much against our arguments and persuasions. We would gladly have detained her."

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"Gone! Good Heavens, was she *able* to go."

"No, sir, assuredly she was not."

Archer Clifton sank into a chair, exclaiming—

"Pray, tell me, dear madam, the circumstances of this departure, and all that occurred from the time I left, until she went away."

"Why, sir, after you left, she continued in the same deep sleep until nearly nine o'clock, when she began to show symptoms of awakening. I sent out and ordered the hot bath to be prepared, and sat down to watch her. As she drew near to consciousness, her face lost that look of profound repose, which had previously marked it, and began to assume an expression of suffering. Her brows folded, and her lips sprang apart and quivered, as with a spasm of sharp pain, and her eyes flared open suddenly, and she was awake. I asked her how she felt, but she shook her head, and closed her eyes again, and shut her teeth tightly, like one trying to bear silently some sharp, inward pain. The bath was then prepared by the bedside, and we began to get her ready for it; but on the slightest attempt to move her, she groaned so deeply, that we scarcely dared to lift her for some minutes. I knew then how it was;—that her muscles were stiff and painful, from the severe exertion of such a long equestrian journey. And I knew also that the hot bath would relieve her; and the doctor's directions had been peremptory, so we tried again, and placed her in the bath. And very soon the hot water seemed to alleviate her sufferings. And when we put her comfortably to bed again, she thanked us very sweetly. I asked her how she found herself. She answered, 'Better'—adding, that she thought, by her hard exercise, she had hurt some part of her chest or side, which had given her great pain, but which was now partially relieved."

"Did she seem very much better? Was her voice strong in speaking?"

"No, it was very weak and faint, and frequently broken, as by some inward pain, as I said."

"Go on, dear lady."

"We brought her a cup of tea and a plate of toast, of both of which she partook slightly. It was then after nine o'clock, and she begged that she might not disturb us—that we would retire to bed—and said that she was better, and would try to sleep again. She then composed herself to rest, and the girls all left the room. I remained watching until I thought she slept, and then I lay down to rest on the other bed in the same room. I think she passed a good night, for I could not divest myself of uneasiness upon her account, and so I could not get to sleep until after midnight, and during all that time I never heard her move, or sigh. After I did get to sleep, however, I slept very soundly, till near six o'clock. And when I awoke, what was my surprise, to see her up and dressed, as for a journey. She looked very pale and ill and

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sorrowful, and in fastening her habit, she frequently stopped and leaned against the bed-post for support. I arose quickly and questioned her wishes, and begged her to lie down again. But she only waved her hand against me, with a mute, imploring gesture. I expostulated with her, but arguments and persuasions were alike in vain—she only answered, 'I must go.'"

"Oh, Heaven! Where, where did she wish to go?"

"We do not know. She was not communicative, and we did not like to question her."

"Forgive me, dear madam. Indeed I fear my questionings must appear almost rude, but my great anxiety must be my excuse."

"Your anxiety is very natural, sir, and we share it."

"Did she know that I was in the neighborhood? Did any one inform her?"

"We cannot tell whether she knew of your presence here. We did not tell her, for, as I said, she made no inquiries, and there was a reserve about her despair that shut itself in from all interference. Indeed it would be scarcely doing justice to her look of deep sorrow, to say that she was the most hopeless looking human being I ever saw in my life. She seemed like one who had seen her last hope go down."

"Merciful God!"

"We used every method, except force, to prevent her leaving us, though we were impressed with the idea that she was going to you. And after her departure, in consulting together, we were half sorry that we had not essayed gentle coercion, for we all suspected that the lady's reason was clouded."

"Great God! I have driven her to madness—perhaps to death!" thought Archer Clifton, but then he exerted self-control enough to conceal the depths and extent of his anxiety, and asked "What road did she take?"

"The North-west road, sir, which branches off towards Mr. Perry's a quarter of a mile up, which was one of our reasons for supposing that she had gone to join you."

Taking a hasty leave of the family, Major Clifton remounted his horse, and rode furiously up the road, meeting General Conyers and Frank, who had lagged behind on their return home. Stopping them, he communicated what had happened, but concealed his worst fears, and merely said that he presumed that Catherine had left for her Virginia home, in ignorance of his liberation, and his presence in the neighborhood, and that he wished, if possible, to overtake her, before she had proceeded far upon her road. Frank immediately turned rein to accompany him, while General Conyers, with many expressions of regret and concern, took leave of them, to return to Greenwood, and explain their absence.

The road lay for many miles through a dense forest, and they galloped onward for hours without meeting a single

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traveller or seeing a solitary house. Near the outskirts of the forest they came upon a party of stragglers, whom they judged to be deserters from the British army. But these men, when questioned, gave cautious and unsatisfactory answers—sulkily insisting that no lady riding alone had passed that way. They next inquired of some field laborers, who were stacking grain a litle farther on. They replied that a lady in a dark riding-dress, riding on a bay horse, and a boy, mounted on a white mare, attended her. Perhaps this was Catherine, and her attendant some chance passenger. They questioned more particularly, and the description given answered to her personal appearance. They asked what road she had taken, and being told "straight ahead," they set off in a gallop. A few miles further on they again inquired, and were told that such a lady, attended by a boy, had passed about an hour before. Full of hope, they put spurs to their horses and hurried on, congratulating themselves that they were gaining on her so fast.

At length they reached a school-house in the woods, where, tied to a fence, they saw the bay horse, with a side-saddle, and a white pony, with a boy's saddle. Dismounting quickly, Captain Fairfax hastened to the school-room door, and inquired of the master to whom the animal belonged?

"To Mrs. Jones, who has just brought her son to school," answered the teacher, full of surprise at the question.

And there, indeed, sat "Mrs. Jones" and young Hopeful, looking as if they considered such investigation into their property very impertinent, to say the least.

Disappointed, Frank returned to Major Clifton with this explanation, and they looked at each other in chagrin and perplexity—Major Clifton with great difficulty maintaining his self-possession, and concealing the dreadful forebodings that overshadowed his mind. They were now thirty miles from Greenwood, and the sun was getting low.

"I do not see anything better to do, Archer, than to keep on till we reach Washington City. No doubt you will see her there, if you do not overtake her before."

Again putting whip to their horses, they galloped on, passing the great belt of forest, and entering upon the bare lowlands, lying south of the city. It was late in the night when they descended the road leading to the Anacostic bridge. They found that the bridge had been destroyed, and they experienced much difficulty and delay before finding a boat to take them across. They entered the ruined and blackened city a little after midnight. At that hour little opportunity of search was afforded, and that little was fruitless. They had much trouble in finding a night's lodging in the desolate city, but at length obtained indifferent shelter, and retired, with the determination to pursue their investigations in the morning. At an early hour they arose, and went out, making inquiries in every direction, but in vain. No one had seen or

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heard of the missing lady, though many cheerfully suggested that she had fallen into the hands of the British soldiery, who were on their retreat through the low counties. Strongly impressed by the idea that she must be in or near Washington, they were unwilling to abandon their search, but remained in the city all day, and through the next night, before resigning all hope of finding her there. Even upon the second morning, Major Clifton and Captain Fairfax were divided in their opinion as to whether they had better go back to St. Mary's, or go on to R———. Major Clifton, full of the darkest presentiments, was disposed to turn back. Captain Fairfax, on the contrary, full of hope and confidence, urged his friend to push forward. While they were debating, General Conyers rode up and joined them. He said he had but that morning reached the city, and had been an hour in search of them. In answer to their anxious questions, General Conyers informed them that up to late the night before, no news had been heard of Mrs. Clifton—that she evidently was not in the neighborhood he had just left. He seemed grieved and alarmed to find that they had not yet overtaken Catherine, but expressed a strong conviction that she must be on her way home. He advised them to pursue the journey, and regretting that peremptory duty called him to an interview with the Secretary of War, and prevented him bearing them company, took leave, and rode away—turning back once to beg that as soon as they had found Catherine, they would write to him at Washington, and let him know. Major Clifton and Frank procured fresh horses, and leaving their own, set forward on their anxious journey.

The gloomiest forebodings darkened the mind of Archer Clifton. There was one scene ever present to his mental vision—where, at the end of her dreadful journey, fainting from incredible exertion, Catherine had fallen into his arms, and he had received her with a harsh and stern rebuke for making a scene :—one look and tone of hers, that filled his soul with remorse and terror prophetic of doom—her last despairing gaze—her last despairing tones, before she sank into insensibility. How plaintively they echoed through his heart ——"Patience, patience, patience——Indeed I will not trouble you, love——I will go away——Maybe God will let me die." Would he ever forget those words, that voice, that gaze of unutterable but meek despair!

"I have broken her heart. I have killed her. I have killed her. Woman's nature could not live through what I have driven *her* through! *Poor, poor girl!*—so bitterly slandered! —so cruelly tortured! Persecuted unto death—or worse—unto madness! And where is she now? Perhaps the waves of the Patuxent roll over her cold bosom—calmed at last; or perhaps she lives—a mad and houseless wanderer; but I will not believe this, I will not believe it! She may be dead; she must be broken-hearted but not mad! All-Merciful God!—

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not mad! She may be dead—and that would be just, for it would secure her happiness and my own retribution, in the only way that both could be secured, perhaps."

Not a hint of this prophetic despair was breathed to Fairfax. Clifton's indomitable pride, regnant even over this anxiety, forbade the communication of his remorse and alarm, and the great reason he had for both. Yet Frank observed and tried to cheer his friend's deep gloom.

"Come, rouse yourself, Archer, we are nearing L———, and shall be at White Cliffs by night-fall, and who but Mrs. Clifton will meet us at the door, with her gentle smile and gentle welcome, and then shall we not all spend a jolly evening, laughing over our cups of tea at the famous wild-goose chase we have had?" But little effect had Frank's words on his drooping fellow traveller. Only as they drew near White Cliffs his depression rose into feverish excitement. Arrived at L———, they inquired if Mrs. Clifton had passed through there, and were informed that she had not. It was long after night-fall that they reached White Cliffs. Here the terrified house servants, roused up from their sleep, answered to all inquiries upon the subject, that they had not seen or heard from their mistress since she left to go to Washington. Henny pushed foremost of all to inquire about her "dear mist'ess and brother Jack." But with a gesture of desperation, Major Clifton sent her off unsatisfied, and turned an agonized look upon Frank. Fairfax was almost discouraged, but, nevertheless, he answered that silent appeal hopefully, saying, "Oh! doubtless she will be home to-morrow, or the next day, at farthest. We ought to have remembered that she had not recovered from her fatigue, and that she would probably take her own time in returning. We have outridden her, evidently."

Major Clifton rejoined by a groan. He ordered refreshments for his guest, and soon after attended him to his room, and retired to his own, not to rest, but to walk about distractedly, and then he burst into Catherine's vacant chamber, and threw himself down upon her empty bed, in the very anguish of bereavement. His long residence in the lowlands of the Chesapeake, during the hot summer months, had predisposed him to illness. His long journey, under the burning sun of August by day, and heavy dews of August by night, fatigue and anxiety, loss of food and sleep, all conspired to bring on the pernicious fever, and before morning Archer Clifton was tossing and raving in high delirium. Summoned by the alarmed servants, Captain Fairfax was early at his bedside, and seeing his condition, dispatched a messenger for the family physician. For many days, his state alternated between delirium and stupor, and his life tottered upon the edge of the grave. And in his delirium all his raving was of Catherine—still Catherine—now adjuring her as his Nemesis—now wooing her by the most tender epithets of affection

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—calling her his "poor wounded dove," his "broken-hearted child," etc. Often he repeated plaintively her last sorrowful, hopeless words.

At length the crisis of the disease came. The delirium arose to frenzy. His spirit, as well as his flesh, seemed to be passing through the very fires of purgatory. He raved incessantly—now of Carolyn, now of Georgia, then of his mother, and always of Catherine—sometimes calling down the bitterest imprecations upon his own head, sometimes severely reproaching Georgia, sometimes pleading his cause with his mother, and always breaking off to soothe and coax Catherine, as if she were circled in his arms.

At length the frenzy fairly exhausted itself, and he sank into a comatose state, to dream of Catherine, to see visions of Catherine, to feel her gentle presence, and healing ministrations all about him. Then came insensibility, which lasted he did not know how long, for all sense of time and place and existence itself was blotted out.

And at last he awoke—the burning fever had gone out from his blood, and a delicious coolness ran through all his veins—the terrible nervous excitement had subsided, and a luxurious calm lay upon mind and body, until memory came to disturb it, perhaps to torture it. He was experiencing the delightful sensations of restoration and convalescence, and his physical state alone would have been sufficient cause for happiness, but for one aching, aching spot, one sharp point of agony as it were in his heart's core. And when the cry in his bosom found its corresponding expression, the word was "Catherine!" "Catherine!"

His eyes had opened on his darkened chamber, where, upon the hearth, glimmered a feeble taper, that scarcely sent its weak rays beyond the edges of the hearth. He knew it must be near day, for the low, melodious detonating sounds of early morning were echoing through the mountains. The chamber seemed deserted—not if Catherine had been living would his sick bed have been so abandoned, he thought. He turned and groaned from the depths of his bosom—"Oh, Catherine! Catherine." His room was very dusky—he could not see the presence by his couch—but now gentler than "tired eyelids upon tired eyes" fell a soft hand upon his brow.

Surely there was but one touch like that in the world!

A new-born, feeble hope was trembling at his heart, a hope that he feared to disturb lest it should die in disappointment; that he dared scarcely submit to the test of certainty, lest that certainty should bring not joy but despair. At last, trembling with doubt, he murmured, "Am I dreaming, or, dear Kate, are you here?"

"I am here," she answered softly.

"Darling, are you well?"

"Very well—but *you* are not well enough to talk yet," said Kate, gently

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"Dear Kate—how long have you been home?"

"Since the day you were taken ill," replied Kate, at the same time encircling his shoulders with one arm, and raising him, while with the other hand she placed a glass to his lips.

Whether the medicine were a potent sedative, or whether her gentler touch had a soothing effect, or whether both these influences acted upon him, I cannot tell; but certainly the nervous excitement, just raised by the discovery of her presence, subsided into perfect calmness, and he lay with his hand folded in Catherine's, until he fell asleep.

When he awoke again it was sunrise, and his room looked cheerful, and the family physician and Frank Fairfax stood at his bedside, with their congratulations on his convalescence. And while they staid, his eyes were roving restlessly around the room, in search of some one else.

And when they went away, Catherine entered, bringing cold water, and came and sponged his head and hands. And then she went out, and returned with his light breakfast She sat upon the bed, supporting his head and shoulders upon her bosom while he ate. At last—

"Take it all away, dearest Kate," he said, "and sit where I can see you. It is you who are my restorative."

When the service was removed, and his pillows were arranged, and he was comfortably laid back upon them again, he said—

"Dearest Kate, do you know that I know at last, how deeply you have been injured?"

She stooped down to him saying, softly—

"Please do not try to talk to-day. Yield to the inclination you have for sleep. It is so needful to you, and will prove so restorative. And to-morrow, when you are better, we can converse."

He smiled upon her, and laid his hand in hers, and while she clasped it, fell asleep.

With a strong constitution like that of Archer Clifton, the convalescence was rapid. And Catherine's presence, as he said, was his true restorative.

The fourth morning from this, he was very much better, and reclined comfortably upon his couch watching Catherine, who moved quietly about the room setting things in order. He was much wasted by illness, and his face looked still more sallow and haggard for the dark, dishevelled hair and whiskers that encircled it; but his countenance wore an expression of subdued joy as he lay and watched Kate. At last—

"Are you so much afraid that Henny will disturb me by rattling a cup and saucer, or jingling a tea-spoon, that you must do all yourself? My devoted Kate, I am not so ill. Come and sit upon the lounge by me, and let me talk to you," he said, holding out his arms.

She went and sat upon the side of the couch, and he encircled her with his arm, while he said—

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"My dear Kate, do you know that I thought I had lost you?"

She raised her eyes in gentle wonder.

"Yes, I thought your great and undeserved misfortunes had killed or maddened you."

"It was the approach of your illness that gave you such dreadful thoughts," said Catherine, gently.

"Not entirely, dear Kate. It was your last words when you fainted on my bosom—do you remember them?"

"No—I remember nothing very distinctly from the moment I threw myself in among the soldiery, and saw the bayonets glittering around me, until I awoke and found myself in the farmer's house."

"Ah! don't you remember that in answer to my harsh question—harsh Kate, because I was still in blindness—you answered—'Patience, patience, patience; indeed I will not trouble you, love—I will go away; maybe God will let me die.'"

"Did I really use those words?"

"Yes, and with such a look of hopeless resignation! I thought that I had lost you, Kate. I thought that you were dead or mad, or at least had been driven from me, for you said so earnestly, 'I will go away?'"

"Did I say that? I do not remember. But I suppose I meant that I would go home. And, oh! do you think—"

"Think what, dear Kate?"

She paused, and her face flushed. She had been about to say, "Do you think that anything but your own will would have driven me from you?" But her old shyness returned upon her stronger than ever.

He understood her, and told her so by the tightening pressure of his arm.

"And, dear Kate, we could hear of you nowhere. You were long in returning, Catherine."

"Yes, when I started I was still very unequal to the return journey, I had weakened myself, and was obliged to ride slowly. And then I lost my way coming back—that was how you missed me."

"And does my Kate know that I know now how deeply she has been wronged, and how nobly she has borne those wrongs—returning always good for evil. And can she guess the remorse and sorrow of heart that hurried on this fit of illness?" Then suddenly overcome with emotion, he exclaimed: "Oh, my God, Catherine! can you imagine how I suffered?"

"Yes, yes, indeed I know it all! I learned all—all—in the raving of your delirium. Others thought it *mere* raving, but I knew."

"And do you know who forged that fatal letter, Kate?"

"Yes."

"Who was it, then?"

"You said, Mrs. Georgia."

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"Yes. It was strange you never suspected that, Kate?"

"I did suspect it."

"You did suspect it!" exclaimed Archer Clifton, in surprise.

"Yes."

"And you never breathed that suspicion!"

"No, because I had no certain evidence against her. It would have been wrong to have acted upon a mere suspicion."

"Just and upright in all things!"

"I only believed God's promises. I left my cause to Heaven."

"And Heaven has vindicated you, my Kate! You have seen my sufferings since discovering how unjustly you had been condemned; but, oh, Kate, I suffered also when I madly believed you guilty."

"I know you did. I do know you did. It was that that gave point to my own sorrow."

"When I cast you into the fire, while you were tortured, *I* was scathed! I loved you too perfectly not to suffer with you. You were too really a portion of myself, for me not to suffer through you. I am thinking of that Archbishop, Kate —whose name I have forgotten—"

"Cranmer?"

"Yes, Cranmer! See how our very unspoken thoughts rush together, dear wife. Yes, Kate, I was thinking of Cranmer, who thrust his offending hand into the flames, and held it there, until it burned to cinders, and dropped off. Oh, my Kate! was it his hand alone that suffered, or did not his whole body agonize with it? And so, my Catherine, when believing you unworthy, I thrust you into the fire, did I not suffer through you in all my nature? I did! I did, Catherine! Lift up the hair from my temples, and tell me what you see?"

Kate lifted the clustering dark curls, and answered—

"A few white hairs."

"*The tears I made you shed, bleached them, Kate.*"

She did not reply, except by meeting his gaze with a look of earnest affection.

He resumed—

"Yes—even then, when insanely I believed it possible for you to be guilty—even *then*—every look of anguish on your brow wrung my bosom—every tear you dropped, fell hot upon my heart. Stoop down. Let me tell you one little simple thing—I sometimes saw—oh, I used to watch you so closely, because I could not help it, Kate;—when I was harsh and stern, I sometimes saw your chin quiver—like a grieved child's—and, Kate, my whole soul would be overflowed with tenderness, which, to conceal, I had to start up and leave the room, with every appearance of anger I that could falsely assume."

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Kate wept—her tears fell fast upon his hand, that she had clasped between her own.

"And, oh, Catherine, to think that all this trouble I have suffered, and have inflicted upon you, should have been so unnecessary!"

Catherine slid from the edge of the couch down upon her knees beside it, and her countenance grew earnest, and inspired with faith and love, as she clasped her hands, and said—

"Oh, no! it was *not* unnecessary. God suffered it to be, and it was well—*very* well! 'All things work together for good to them that love the Lord.' And every pang that has ploughed our hearts in the past, will make them fruitful of good in the future. One fruit is, that the suffering of the last two years has drawn our hearts together as nothing else could have done. Because—"

Again in the full tide of her earnest thoughts, the old bashfulness flushed her cheek, and silenced her tongue. She wished to say, "Because I think you would never have known me so well, or held me so dear, if you had not proved me by fiery trial."

And again his heart rightly interpreted her silence, and he answered her unuttered thought by saying—

"Yes, you are right, my own dear blessing! You are right, for I never should have known your full value but for the trial you have passed through. Yet not now only, but always have I loved you, dear wife. I denied it to myself—I denied it to others—but there it was, the perfect, vital love, as sure as fate. When I first saw you, Kate, I met in your face, your voice, your manner,—yes, in every look and tone and gesture, in your whole unity—something that I had vainly sought through life—something homogenial to my nature—something perfectly satisfying. You seemed, dear Kate, not so much a separate existence as the completion of my own. What did you say, Kate? Your voice, too, is 'ever soft, gentle and low,'—but speak again dearest. It is something that my heart listens to hear."

"I said that I, too, when we first met," she hesitated, and her cheek crimsoned, but feeling that he listened breathless for her words, she continued,—"Well, only this: I felt as if I were wholly yours, Archer—I have felt so ever since."

Again she paused from native bashfulness.

"Kiss me, Kate,—you never kissed me in your life."

Blushing and timid as the girl that she was, she stooped and lightly touched his lips with hers. But laughing fondly he threw his arm around her exclaiming—

"You child! you child! Married two years and cannot kiss me!" and pressed her to his bosom for one instant, in a passionate embrace, that sent life and gladness through all her veins, and then he said, "I am not ill, Catherine. I have drawn health from your lips. See who is at the door, love."

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Kate went and admitted Frank, who came in accoutred for travelling.

"Ha! where now, Fairfax?" asked Clifton.

"For Richmond to-day."

"No! You will not leave us so soon?"

"Yes,—the truth is, I *must*. I have an engagement to fulfil there on Thursday."

"An engagement! Of what nature, Frank, if a friend may ask?"

"Why, the fact is," said Captain Fairfax, growing very red in the face, with the effort of pulling on a pair of gloves, "I am going to be married."

"Married! Oh, Frank! and not to tell us anything about it till now."

"Hem! There was no proper opportunity till now," stammered the young man.

"Well, who is the young lady, Frank?" asked Clifton, while Catherine looked and listened with interest.

"The only friend that my dear Zuleime found in all her adversity—Mrs. Knight," said Frank, and then he added, quickly, "It was a long time before my mother's pride could be reconciled to this, but Ida's genuine goodness won her at last."

After the first involuntary expression of surprise, Catherine and Clifton exchanged glances, and Catherine said,

"Well, Captain Fairfax, as soon after the marriage as is convenient,—instantly after the ceremony, if you please,—you must bring your bride down, and pass some weeks with us."

"I thank you, Mrs. Clifton; I profoundly thank you; but we are going immediately to England. Ida pines to see her father, who is a country curate, in Devonshire. She has never been reconciled with him since her first unfortunate marriage. I have promised to take her to him, and so immediately after the ceremony, we four—that is, Ida, myself, and our two little girls—are going to embark for Liverpool."

"Well, altogether, this has put a surprise upon us, Frank," said Major Clifton, meditatively running his fingers through his hair; "but, when you return you will make us a visit. By the way, how long do you intend to be absent?"

"Until the spring. And now I must really bid you goodbye, regretting very much that I cannot carry you both along with me."

They shook hands cordially, Clifton saying—

"Well, Frank, our very best wishes attend you. May you have much happiness!"

Captain Fairfax turned to take leave of Catherine, but she said that she would attend him down. She left the room with him. And when the door shut behind them, Clifton clasped his hands upon his brow and closed his eyes, as in deep thought or prayer. When Kate re-entered the room softly. he said—

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"Come hither, Catherine!"

And she came and knelt by his side, and he encircled her with his arm, and drew her face down to his bosom, and raising his eyes toward Heaven, said—

"'A wife is from the Lord!' Even so, oh, God! How shall I thank Thee? Hear me consecrate my whole future life to Thy service, in acknowledgment of this, Thy gift!"

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